

Language and Language Teaching

Volume 4 Number 1 Issue 7

January 2015

ISSN: 2277-307X



Vidya Bhawan
Society



Azim Premji
University

Language and Language Teaching

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Copy editor: Preeti Jhangiani; Cover and Layout: Rajesh Sen

Thanks are due to Arindam Chakraborty for his help in finalising this issue of LLT.

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Language and Language Teaching

Volume 4 Number 1 Issue 7 January 2015

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On Under-coded English and Linguistic Accommodation

Asha Tickoo

Introduction

Much that is said about the spread of English today speaks of English hegemony: the “ideology that glorifies the dominant language (or variety) and serves to stigmatize others” (Phillipson, 1999, p. 40; the addition in brackets is mine). But the contradictory and significantly more current truth is that the user of English as Foreign Language (EFL) is no longer his/her former disadvantaged and disenfranchised self. In adopting English for significant life-purposes, s/he has produced a distinctly under-coded version of English (representing formally much less than full meaning, UE for future reference) which is rapidly gaining acceptance as the most widely used World English (WE) variety.

Learnt and used under pressure for complex and demanding academic and/or professional cross-global exchange, EFL today is under-coded systematically and comprehensively, and yet effective. It works, however, largely because it is readily accommodated by an interlocutor committed to ensuring its communicative success.

Cooperation that furthers successful communication is an integral part of social exchange (Grice, 1975). But in the EFL context, communicative success is bolstered by a more particular incentive—successful communication across the North-South divide has become strategic and self-serving for westerners contending with the sudden and extraordinary rise of China and the broader ‘emerging’ world. Hence, the blatant deviance from accepted norms that UE constitutes and which at one time

met with resistance, if not outright rejection, today receives tacit acceptance and accommodation. This covert tolerance is highly significant because it entails a radical shift in the balance of responsibility in the act of communication—from the message framer, to ensure s/he is understood, to the interlocutor to ensure s/he achieves understanding. Therefore, UE succeeds because the interlocutor is actively engaged in ensuring its success.

The linguistic phenomenon of UE is interesting therefore, both in itself and as evidence of significantly shifting power dynamics around the world, one that both fuels its spread and secures its survival. In this paper, I will explain the notion of under-coding, give evidence of its comprehensive and systematic use by fairly advanced EFL users, and argue that its successful use is a consequence of a highly invested, geo-politically conscious, and therefore, profoundly accommodating interlocutor.

Understanding Linguistic Under-coding

The term ‘under-coding’ refers to the character of mapping between the coding means and the functional domain it serves to represent (Blakemore, 1992; Grundy, 1995; Tickoo, 2011). In under-coding, the representational means do not capture the function to the ‘full’ degree of specificity. Interestingly, a specific manifestation of under-coding is an inherent part of the linguistic system, as is evident in an assessment of the English possessive (cf. Blakemore, 1992; Grundy, 1995): Whereas, ‘John’s book’ (1a) is

the book he owns, 'John's father' (1b) is not the one he owns, nor is 'John's job' (1c) the one he owns.

- 1a. John's book = The book that John owns.
- b. John's father = The man who fathered John.
- c. John's job = The work that John is engaged in carrying out.

Clearly, the various meanings of the possessive have not been given individual and well-distinguished linguistic representation.

Strategic Under-coding

It is also true that it is easier, more efficient and more economical, to use language without exploiting its full potential to mark functional specificity, when the context permits it. So whereas 'John's book' is either the one he authored or the one he owns, where shared context can be exploited to help disambiguate it, under-coding makes for greater communicative ease, economy and efficiency.

Under-coding is more Natural than Full-Coding

Since speech normatively occurs in a shared context, interlocutors fully accommodate under-coding and in doing so take on the more active decoding role that this entails. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that under-coding appropriately, with proper sensitivity to the character of the shared context, is acquired naturally.

A Comprehensive Comparison of Full-Coding and Under-coding

Full-coding, by contrast, is an artifact of formal (academic and literary) written language, although paradoxically it is also the point of reference for under-coding, which is typically used in informal speech. If we compare

full-coding in formal written language with under-coding in informal speech, for some key linguistic features of the task of message framing, we can illustrate both the character, and comprehensive kind of impact, of this difference. This is done below for (a) indefinite reference, (b) the representation of temporal and atemporal intersentential relations (c) the signalling of genre.

Under-coded Indefinite Reference

Referring successfully is a key requisite skill in message framing. But unlike definite referents which can be made identifiable (cf., 2(b) versus 2(a)), indefinite referents do not become identifiable irrespective of how they are expressed (cf., 3(b) versus 3(a)). Though 'a girl I had met at the local bar', 3(b), is more specific than 'a girl', 3(a), she is not any more identifiable. Hence, while the 'full' coding, 3(b), required in writing is different from the under-coding, 3(a), accommodated in speech, under-coding does not result in less communicative success.

- 2 (a) The girl is studying with me. (referring to one out of a group of girls)
- (b) The girl in the red dress is studying with me. (referring to one out of a group of other girls who are not dressed in red)
- 3 (a) I was goin' with a girl, one time. (From Labov & Waletzky, 1997, p. 9) (Speech)
- (b) I was dating a girl I had met at the local bar. (Writing)

Under-coded Intersentential Relations

Intersentential relations are just as crucial in the task of message framing as reference framing. They realize very specific coherence-types in

writing, but in speech uphold no more than a broad conformity to the coherence constraint.

In example 4 below, one has to interpret ‘He had killed one man...’ as parenthetical, in order to connect the age of the doctor with the following statement about the youth of his wife, but this is not formally represented. In written language, this clause is formally marked as parenthetical, as in example 5 in which it is a modifying relative clause and is also placed in parenthesis.

4. “the Doc was an old man... He had killed one man, or - had done time. But he had a young wife, *and* [italics added] those days I dressed well. *And* seemingly she was trying to make me.” (From Labov & Waletzky, 1997, p. 5) (Speech)

5. “the Doc was an old man... (of whom it was said that he had killed one man, or - had done time.) *But* [italics added] he had a young wife, *and* apparently she was trying ‘to make me’ *because* [italics added] those days I dressed well *and* therefore looked attractive.” (Writing)

With the overt formal marking of the informationally parenthetical role of this clause, the following ‘but’ also sets the age of the man in contrast with the youth of his wife, as a point of salience to the comment that follows. This explicit capture of nuanced propositional connection does not happen in the spoken version (example 4). There is a resulting diminished impact of ‘but’.

This is also accompanied by the over-use of ‘and’, which is also not constrained by the functional requirements that govern its written counterpart. A loose informational parallelism holds between the first pair of ‘and’-linked clauses—‘he had a young wife’ *and* ‘I dressed well’. The second ‘and’ even more clearly marks a general coherence tie: “But he had a young

wife, and those days I dressed well. *And* seemingly she was trying to make me”.

The use of ‘and’ in example 5, however, is clearly functionally constrained by parallelism: ‘and’ connects ‘she was young’ and ‘she was trying ‘to make me’; ‘and’ also connects ‘I dressed well’ and ‘I looked attractive’.

Speech under-codes intersentential ties, but, while this calls for more active and independent interpretation, it does not lead to any lack of understanding.

Temporal intersentential ties are as necessary for message framing as atemporal ties. We can examine ‘then’ marked temporal progression as an example. ‘Then’ marks a distinct temporal movement in writing; it is used between two successive telic events, when both are informationally new and informationally salient (Tickoo, 2002, 2011), as in 6(c):

- 6 (a) I arrived early full of trepidation and foreboding.
(b) I hesitated for several minutes at the front door, torn between the need to know and a keen sense of self-preservation.
(c) *Then* [italics added] I picked up courage and rang that dreaded doorbell.

Although ‘hesitated’ in 6(b) is also telic and informationally new, it is not salient in its context of occurrence, hence ‘then’ in this context would be infelicitous.

Temporal ‘then’ used in speech, however, is much less functionally constrained. Compare, for example, the use of ‘then’ in the following examples 7 and 8.

7. “And seemingly she *was trying* [italics added] to make me. I *never noticed* [italics added] it. Fact is, I *didn’t like* [italics added] her very well, because she *had* [italics added]—she *was* [italics added] a nice looking

girl until you saw her feet. She *had* [italics added] big feet. Jesus, God, she *had* big feet! *Then* [italics added] she left a note one day she was going to commit suicide because he was always raising hell about me. He came to my hotel. Nice big blue 44, too.” (Labov & Waletzky, 1997, p. 5) (Speech)

8. She sought my attention night after night at the local bar, but I never noticed it. *Then*, one day, she left me a note. (Writing)

In 7, ‘then’ merely marks a point of transition in the story; it does not follow a preceding telic event. But in the written version in 8, it follows a repeated, but in each instance, telic (i.e., completed) preceding event (‘sought my attention’).

It is clear from these examples that informal speech under-codes the functional specificity of the temporal ‘then’, but with no evidence of any resulting lack of clarity.

Under-Coded Genre-Signaling

Signalling the genre of the message is also crucial in communication. In the written medium, genre is signalled redundantly, using multiple linguistic marking systems. But there is much less formal representation of genre distinction in informal speech. In storytelling, for example, there is considerable difference in the marking of the passage of time (the defining feature of a narrative) in the conversational and written medium (Tickoo, 2003, 2011). It is marked as varying in pace and quality of movement in written stories, but is frequently even/invariant in conversational narratives. Compare example 9, which uses one kind of temporal passage, ‘and’, with example 10, which uses two well-differentiated kinds of temporal passage (represented in a and b, below):

(a) VP-conjunction (“I got next to him, *and* [italics added] positioned myself so

that....”), which marks a rapid pace along less individually salient constituent successive actions, and

(b) ‘and then’ (“*and then* [italics added] I hit him ...”) which marks a more deliberate pace along constituent actions of greater individual informational salience.

9. *And* [italics added] he hit me, man, like I hit him. *And* like, I - I got next to the guy. He didn’t get a chance to use nothing, *and* I put something on him. (Labov & Waletzky, 1997, p. 9) (Speech)

10. He hit me...I got next to him, *and* [italics added] positioned myself so that I didn’t give him a chance to do anything, *and then* hit him with all my might.

There is a less nuanced capture of temporal passage in conversational storytelling, therefore, and yet no evidence of resulting lack of clarity.

In general, informal speech systematically under-codes relative to the full-coding in formal written language, but while this requires more active engagement in message decoding, it does not appear to produce any loss of communicative effectiveness.

EFL Data Assessment

Because under-coding eases message framing without loss of comprehensibility, it has inherent appeal in the EFL context. In what follows I will suggest that EFL writing is undercoded in the same way as the casual speech of L1 users, evidenced above. I will also suggest that this under-coded writing is fully accommodated by the prototypical interlocutor.

In providing evidence of under-coding, I draw from my previous assessments of indefinite NPs (Tickoo, 2002a, 2011), atemporal intersentential relations (Tickoo, 2001, 2005, 2011), temporal

intersentential relations (Tickoo, 2002b), and the signalling of story as genre (Tickoo, 2003, 2011), all using large samples of prose passages by high-intermediate EFL university students, with Cantonese as L1. Each of these individual assessments showed linguistic under-coding on the pattern found in L1 English speech, illustrated above. The following are some illustrative examples:

EFL users under-code indefinite reference in their prose, exactly as do L1 users in informal speech (cf. example 11, compared to the felicitous example 11(a), below).

11. "I shared a table with *a man* [italics added]." (Here, 'a man' is not used to contrast with 'a woman'.)

11(a) I shared a table with *a man whose appearance amused me* [italics added].

EFL users also under-code intersentential relations, marking a general coherence rather than specific kinds, much as do L1 users in informal speech. This is illustrated in 12.

12. Dealing with the stress of college life

- 1) In everyone's life, stress seems to be unavoidable.
- 2) When one grows up, one will face different kinds of stress in different stages.
- 3) In the college life, students have to face the stress that comes from themselves, from their classmates as well as from their families.

12(a)

- 1) In everyone's life, stress seems unavoidable.
- 2) One faces it in every phase of life, and
- 3) Each phase comes with its own kind of stress...

Sentence 2, of 12, is coherent in its context of use, but it does not mark the required

'encapsulating' relationship (Hoey, 1994; Tickoo, 2005) to the preceding sentence that would signal retention of the point of sentence 1 in sentence 2.

In 12(a), the reformulated version, the original sentence 2 of 12 is fragmented into two sentences, 2 and 3. Sentence 2 of 12(a) relates back by using the relationship of 'encapsulation', which retains sentence 1 in the proposition of 2. For this reason, we can rephrase 2 of 12(a) as "because stress is unavoidable, one faces it at every stage of life". After this, 3 of 12(a) uses the relationship of simple addition, adding the fact that one faces stress in a unique manifestation at each such phase.

Hence, whereas in the EFL passage (12), sentence 2 relates to 1 as merely loosely coherent, in standard academic writing, 12(a), coherence is marked in an individualized way, leaving nothing for the interlocutor to work out.

In EFL usage, temporal 'then' also appears in an under-coded manifestation, as in L1 informal speech (13).

13 (a) "I just wanted to go to sleep.

(b) *Then* [italics added] I had a wonderful night sleep."

It is clear that 13(b) does not follow a telic preceding event since 'want' is a state, and, therefore, without an end point.

Additionally, EFL users under-code genre specificity, using for example, an even/unvarying temporal passage in storytelling, as is evident in the following example (14), rather than the variable passage that marks the genre in its written manifestations, as do L1 users in their conversational storytelling.

14. First time, I went out with my girlfriend. She invited me to go to her sister birthday party. I went to the birthday party, I saw a lot of people.

I felt very nervous with them....Then she found me and her a good place to seat...I was sitting next to her, then I was talking with her very excited at that time....Then I felt really better now.

Accommodating Under-Coding

In EFL context, the interlocutor in a typical exchange readily accommodates under-coding. The most discerning interlocutor in communication with the EFL user is likely to be the university EFL teacher. His/her reaction to under-coding must, therefore, be regarded as noteworthy. In this study, we examined feedback from six experienced university EFL teachers on the prose samples that were assessed earlier in the text to identify instances of under-coding. Assessment of their feedback showed that they did not say anything about under-coding. There was no negative feedback on any instance of under-coding, and, therefore, one must also assume no failure to understand because of it.

The Emergence and Acceptance of UE

It is reasonable to conclude that EFL users under-code in contexts where highly proficient users would not, and do so much as do L1 users in informal speech contexts. Like L1 users in casual speech, EFL users under-code because it is more natural, easier and more efficient than full-coding—a feature of specialist language use which must be formally learned. They also under-code because, as we have established above, their interlocutors (in particular their teachers, the most discerning amongst them) readily accommodate it.

Interlocutors in EFL exchange accommodate under-coding first out of a strategic interest in making communication work (Grice, 1975); they compensate for it by over-investing in decoding in proportion to the amount of under-coding. Additionally, they are responsive to compelling

present-day geo-political and economic incentives, which further bolster such accommodation. Today, Western countries are willing to bend over backwards to benefit from the astonishing growth of China and the rest of the ‘emerging’ world. A part of this self-serving accommodation manifests as an unprecedented tolerance for the rapidly learned, less demanding coding systems of the new UE. In consequence, UE works and its effective use provides tacit approval for its continued use. It is fair to say, therefore, that UE is rapidly establishing itself as the most widely used of WE varieties.

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Back to School with Alternative Assessment

Kirti Kapur

Introduction

This article is based on a series of journal entries recounting my experiences and observations during a three month field visit as a teacher educator in Nigam Pratibha Girl's School, Aya Nagar, New Delhi.

"It is not realistic. It would be impossible to give each student feedback on mistakes they make", she offered.

This was Suman's (name changed) comment when I asked her if English students of class V were given feedback on the errors they were making in their homework or exams.

"I can't possibly tell each student where she went wrong," she remarked. "Checking their notebooks is such a time consuming task in itself. Once I return their copies they can see which one of their answers is right or wrong."¹

This gave me an acute sense of *déjà vu*; before joining NCERT I had spent close to a decade teaching English language in different kinds of schools—from highbrow, posh, private ones to makeshift huts in villages across India—where such conversations were routine. However, the challenge of being a teacher-educator is to be able to identify such opinions and to transform them into opportunities that make learning a process that can be wondrous for young children.

Using research to identify the absences and gaps in learning situations can prove to be a good starting point to introduce simple teaching-learning techniques that can improve

the experience of education without any major investment. During a field survey that I will discuss in the paper, I was able to identify one such opportunity for both students and teachers through the introduction of self-assessment.

New Techniques

"Today, all of you will check your own work", I said to students of class V one day.

I was somewhat amused at the look of incredulity on their faces, wondering if they had heard me correctly. The question that was writ large on their faces was "How?" Her interest piqued, one of the girls piped,

"But how can we check our work?"

I smiled and said, "We will finish reading the lesson, and I will give you three questions. You will answer the questions in the class. After you have written the answers, I will tell you the correct answer, and you will tell me if you have made a mistake or not."

"What do you say?" I asked.

Some of the girls nodded their heads, defining the arc of a circle with their chins. The others looked on with interest. I knew from experience that I had their attention.

We read a passage in class. The questions that followed required the students to complete sentences and fill in the blanks by using words with the appropriate tense. The second exercise involved rearranging sentences to summarize a paragraph.

After the exercises, I wrote the answers on the blackboard. I then asked the students to compare their responses with those on the board, and identify the questions with differing responses. This was followed by a discussion around the mistakes made by them and why using words in the right tense was important. Thereafter, the students corrected their responses on their own, and exchanged their notebooks with a neighbour for a final overview.



Figure 1. Students at the Nigam Pratibha Girl's School, Aya Nagar, attempting a self-evaluation exercise. © Dr Kirti Kapur

For many students, this was the first time that they had seen a conceptual link between:

- Their preparation to write an answer
- Writing an answer
- What happens to the answers when they reach the teacher, and
- The teacher's thought process or reactions to their answers.

It was clear that the students were perceptibly more engaged in the classroom after this exercise.

Besides the students, I was also following the class teacher's reaction to the self-assessment. Suman's face betrayed her astonishment and delight at the sight of the students applying themselves to the process of reviewing their own answers in class. This was a crucial marker of the need for assessment literacy among teachers, teacher educators and administrators. In fact, educationists at all levels of teaching should be equipped to critically evaluate whether their assessment is yielding the desired results and being practiced in the correct spirit. Moreover, is the assessment improving the teaching-learning process, and what kind of assessments do the teachers need to understand?

Traditional Systems

In a traditional assessment process, students answer a question without any immediate feedback from the teacher on what they get correct or wrong. Also, the assessment takes place after a long delay, and is usually carried out by the teacher alone. We can call this the Open Loop Model of Assessment²; in this, the frequency and quality of feedback can be greatly improved (see Figure 2). In this model of assessment, typically, the teacher collects answers to multiple questions from all the students (between 40-100) through homework or an examination. On most occasions, the teacher is under severe time pressure to meet deadlines for correcting homework / papers, and finishing the syllabus for a particular subject on time. A paucity of teachers means that one person is responsible for multiple subjects, and ensuring that syllabi for all these subjects is 'finished' before the final examination. The definition of 'finished' varies with each teacher, and this subjectivity is one of the reasons for inconsistencies in learning indicators.

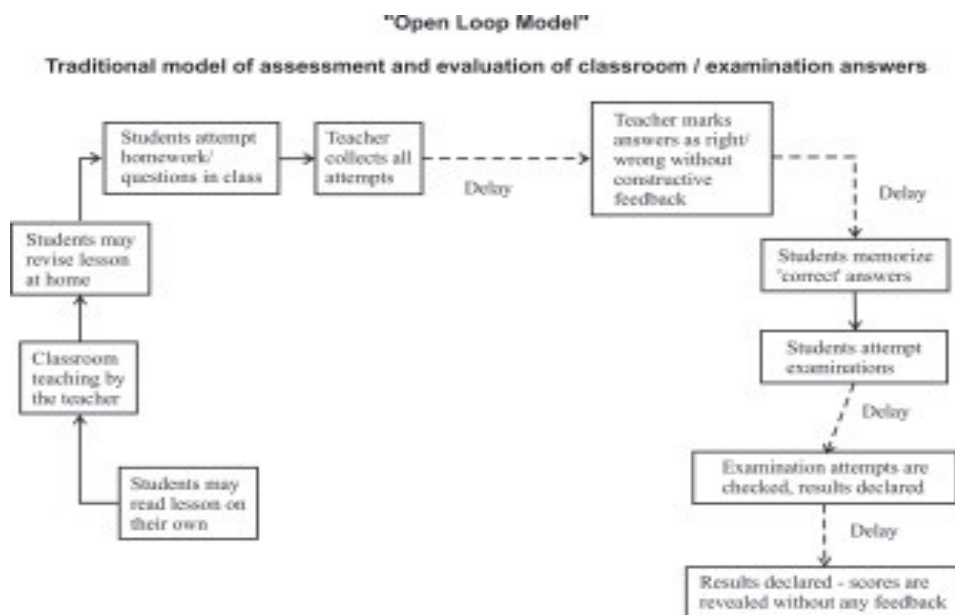


Figure 2. Open loop model of assessment - Traditional method of evaluating students' answers © Dr Kirti Kapur

Self-assessment, on the other hand allows children to analyse their own answers. In most cases, this happens immediately after the student has answered the question, and her / his answer is still fresh in the memory. More significantly, self-assessment lends itself to a student applying corrective action herself / himself. We can call this the Closed Loop Model of Assessment³ with a feedback loop that corrects and reinforces learning (see Figure 3).

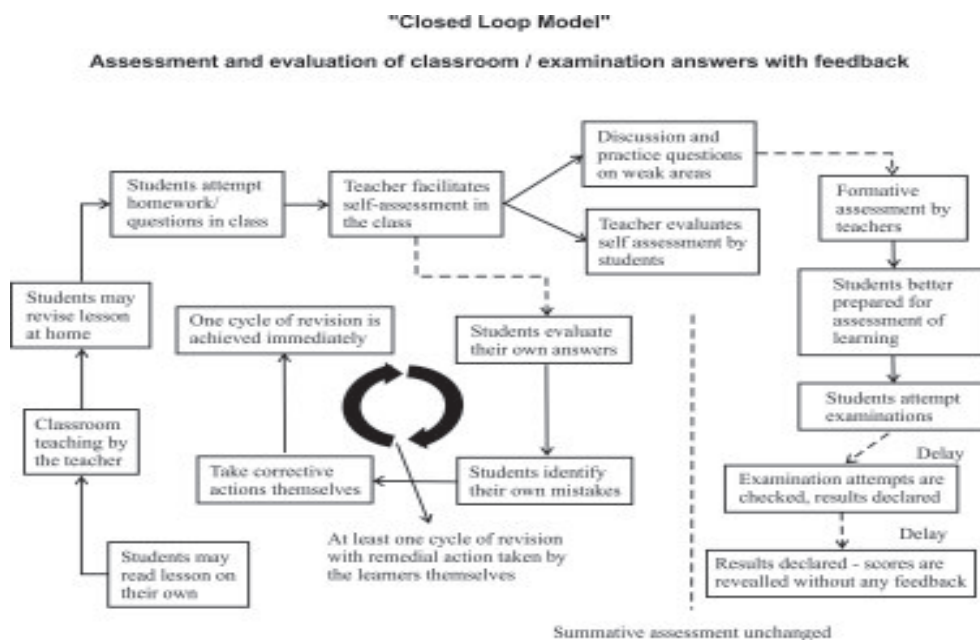


Figure 3. Closed loop model of assessment - Assessment of students' answers with feedback. © Dr Kirti Kapur

As a teacher, the self-assessment exercise allowed me to understand some of the major weaknesses of the students. For instance, after the self-assessment exercises, I knew that the majority of the class could comprehend the lesson, follow the logical progression of the story, and attempt synonyms. However, their application of tenses was weak and required further inputs.

Somewhat surprised by the success of the exercise, Suman gushed, “I have to admit, this method really works. Even Meenu (name changed) was paying attention! Though I must say this too will take up a lot of time. I cannot possibly do this for each exercise and each chapter.”

I agreed that considering the numerous demands on a teacher’s time, including several administrative duties, it may not be practical for her to do this in every class. However, I also explained to her that if this was done right from the beginning, and often enough, students would be likely to learn faster. Moreover, this could potentially improve their learning experience as well as save time for the teacher. I added, “The trick would be to take up this activity for specific activities, and periodically. This will also allow you to make a real-time evaluation that will help in continuous assessment of the children in your class.”

With “...more use of descriptive records of learner development in language and learning which [track] language development along with other curricular abilities” (Rea-Dickins and Rixon, 1997, p. 151), we can enable learners to develop insights into their own progress. Here, the teaching-learning processes focus more on communicative competence rather than mastery of the rules of grammar and linguistic accuracy. In India, the last decade has witnessed an increase in the teaching of English. Since 2005, we have also seen a notable shift from a structural, teacher-centric approach in teaching

to a communicative and inclusive approach. In his article “Assessment of Young Learners”, the author K. Shaaban refers to Stevick (1990), Krashen (1982) and Asher (1988) to assert that “...new approaches in teaching EFL/ ESL recognize that affective considerations are of vital importance for the acquisition of a foreign/ second language; they suggest teaching methods and techniques that help learners acquire the language in an anxiety-reduced environment” (Shaaban, 2005, p. 1).

Need for Alternative Models

It is clear that this calls for assessment processes that are humanistic and learner-centred. Traditional paper-pencil tests do not involve the learner holistically in the assessment process. Formative assessment on the other hand, comprises several techniques and activities that ensure learner participation in assessment. Known as alternative assessment, these techniques may be described as, “any method of finding out what a student knows or can do that is intended to show growth and inform instruction and is not a standardized or traditional test” (Pierce and O’Malley, 1992, p. 2).

Formative assessment is indeed a powerful tool in the hands of the teachers for improvement in assessment. According to Popham (2008), “The function of the formative assessment process is to supply evidence that will enhance students’ learning” (as cited in Popham 2009). Summative assessment involves using “...evidence when arriving at decisions about already completed instructional events such as the quality of a year’s worth of schooling or the effectiveness of a semester-long...course.” (as cited in Popham, 2009)

When we assess learners using a variety of tools and methods, we take into consideration the diversity of the learning needs of the students such as their interests, and learning styles. Activities are then designed based on their

learning needs with the aim of nurturing positive aspects rather than just conducting summative evaluation.

Key aspects of alternative assessment are:

- activities and tasks are based on authentic tasks
- there is greater focus on communication rather than on right or wrong answers
- self-assessment and peer assessment are an integral part of alternative assessment

Alternative assessment has scope for dynamic linguistic development. Techniques such as assessment of non-verbal responses, oral responses, written work, presentations, portfolios, projects, interactions between students, student-teacher interactions, self-assessment and peer / group assessment allow students to demonstrate what they can do with language through a range of activities and tasks. Since the environment is non-threatening, it actually helps learners prepare for summative assessments including tests for achievement, surveys and scholarships, etc., by developing their confidence and understanding of the nuances involved in the assessment of what they have learned. When learners are involved in self-assessment, it has a wash back effect and there is space for on-going dialogue between all the stakeholders.

Alternative assessment involves use of authentic activities that are designed around topics or issues relevant to the age, interest, cognitive level as well as context of the students. These tasks have a process approach to language learning and connect learning to real world situations. They require creative use of language rather than simple repetition. According to Campbell et al., alternative assessment views students as enquirers into knowledge, "... who are active, deep learners, collaborating and using higher levels of thinking skill." (as cited in Burger

(2008), p. 33). Testing and evaluation have followed a top down approach. However in today's learner-centred classrooms, teachers need to tap into bottom-up approaches.

However, it is not enough to only train the teachers for these approaches. Learners also need to be prepared for such assessment processes. When assessment is embedded in the teaching learning process, there is a supportive environment in which students feel comfortable. Talking to them about assessment makes them understand the value of assessment, and seeking their ideas involves learners meaningfully in their own education.

Checklists and rubrics are useful devices for self and peer assessment because they provide rationale and criteria for approaching and evaluating tasks. There is scope for reflection, and over time this habit can lead to overall improvements in learning. For example a checklist for a writing task can be:

- Has the main point been addressed in the introduction?
- Does each paragraph start with a topic sentence?
- Is there a connection between paragraphs?
- Is there a concluding paragraph?

Reflecting on the process of writing using a checklist will help students in identifying their strong points, as well as weak areas, irrespective of the topic. Checklists can be used for self-assessment as well. For example self-assessment in a speaking task may include the following:

- Do I have an appropriate quotation to introduce the topic as per the topic?
- Have I put all my points in order?
- Do I have an appropriate conclusion?
- Do I look at the audience while speaking?

Rubrics with a component that assigns levels of performance, e.g. weak, satisfactory, good and very good on various aspects of a task may also be used by the learners for self / peer assessment. The teacher may even change the adjectives as per the task. A sample rubric from the TOEFL internet based test is given as follows:

Score	Task Description
5	An essay at this level largely accomplishes all of the following: - effectively addresses the topic and task - is well organized and well developed, using clearly appropriate explanations, exemplifications, and/or details - displays unity, progression, and coherence - displays consistent facility in the use of language, demonstrating syntactic variety, appropriate word choice, and idiomaticity, though it may have minor lexical or grammatical errors
4	An essay at this level largely accomplishes all of the following: - addresses the topic and task well, though some points may not be fully elaborated - is generally well organized and well developed, using appropriate and sufficient explanations, exemplifications, and/or details - displays unity, progression, and coherence, though it may contain occasional redundancy, digression, or unclear connections - displays facility in the use of language demonstrating syntactic variety and range of vocabulary, though it will probably have occasional noticeable minor errors in structure, word form, or use of idiomatic language that do not interfere with meaning
3	An essay at this level is marked by one or more of the following: - addresses the topic and task using somewhat developed explanations, exemplifications, and/or details - displays unity, progression, and coherence, though connection of ideas may be occasionally obscured - may demonstrate inconsistent facility in sentence formation and word choice that may result in lack of clarity and occasionally obscure meaning - may display accurate but limited range of syntactic structures and vocabulary
2	An essay at this level may reveal one or more of the following weaknesses: - limited development in response to the topic and task - inadequate organization or connection of ideas - inappropriate or insufficient exemplifications, explanations, or details to support or illustrate generalizations in response to the task - a noticeably inappropriate choice of words or word forms - an accumulation of errors in sentence structure and/or usage
1	An essay at this level is seriously flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses: - serious disorganization or underdevelopment - little or no detail, or irrelevant specifics, or questionable responsiveness to the task - serious and frequent errors in sentence structure or usage
0	An essay at this level merely copies words from the topic, rejects the topic, or is otherwise not connected to the topic, is written in a foreign language, consists of keystroke characters, or is blank.

Figure 4. Independent writing rubrics: Scoring standards. © ETS, 2008
(https://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/.../Integrated_Writing_Rubrics_2008.pdf...)

It is evident that qualitative / descriptive feedback is always more educative than just a grade. “Fortunately, the field of evaluation has witnessed a major shift from strictly summative testing tools and procedures to a more humanistic approach using informal assessment techniques that stress formative evaluation.” (O’Neil, 1992, p. 14)

Conclusion

In the final analysis, while self-assessment certainly has several benefits, teachers need to be cautious about several things. A few points for consideration are:

1. Some students may respond to self-assessment immediately, while others may require some individual attention to ensure they benefit from the exercise.
2. The teacher cannot use this method with every question. For instance, there will be several types of questions, particularly in literature, where there can be multiple correct answers. Self-assessment would be detrimental in this situation as it prescribes one answer, limiting the student’s opportunity to think.
3. Self-assessment is not a panacea for all the challenges of assessment. For instance, self-assessment does not lead to a change in the structure of summative assessment wherein students are not given detailed feedback.
4. In a class that has children with special needs, self-assessment must be adapted to suit the needs of the child.
5. A combination of formative and summative assessment will contribute to a robust and representative form of evaluating progress and curricular outcomes.

In summary, assessment is central to the entire process of teaching and learning and teachers should give opportunities to students to self-assess. Opportunities must also be created for receiving feedback with understanding, self-monitoring, practicing and redoing / re-attempting. After all, “...the ultimate goal of evaluation...[is] to give us the knowledge to be able to reflect upon, discuss, and assist a student’s journey...” (Huerta-Macias, 1995, p. 10) and I’m sure Suman would agree!

Footnote

¹ This is one of the many conversations I have had with teachers over the past three months during an on-going field research programme under which faculty from NCERT is sent to government schools across the country.

² A term used in Game Theory where all stakeholders do not have access to information that impacts decisions of other players.

³ A term used in Game Theory where all stakeholders have access to information that impacts decisions of other players; also known as common knowledge.

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‘Right Writing’ in Classrooms: Learning to be Artificial

Nidhi Kunwar

Introduction

Writing is a medium to express our thoughts, feelings and views. The basic need to communicate and express constitutes the core of writing. Being one of the core literacy skills, writing is always strongly emphasized in schools. From language to mathematics, from science to social science, writing is a core part of learning. A student spends the maximum time in school ‘writing’. However, does this emphasis make our students good writers? Do they engage in writing in a creative way? Do they use writing for real expression?

The present paper has been written with a view to explain and explore what type of writing students encounter in schools. The study is based on data collected from the school notebooks of middle grade students. For the study, writing samples from Hindi language notebooks of middle grade students were collected and analysed to understand how writing is taught in schools. Attempts have been made to explore the following areas:

- The type of writing topics given to middle grade students in schools
- The type of language used by middle grade students to express their thoughts
- The quality of writing found in the school notebooks of middle grade students
- The type of feedback given by the teachers to middle grade students.

These topics have been explored to understand what shape writing takes in our classrooms. What type of writing by students is accepted as ‘right writing’? What type of writing is portrayed as ‘right writing’ through our pedagogy?

The paper is divided into three sections. The first section provides an analysis of school writing samples collected from the school notebooks of middle grade students. The second section contains a discussion on the status of writing in our schools. The last section provides suggestions for improving writing pedagogy.

School Writing Samples: An Analysis

For the study, Hindi language school notebooks of grade six and seven students were collected from different schools. The compositions written in the notebooks were used as data and analysed. The following themes emerged while analysing the data (these themes have been explained and consolidated with excerpts from the collected data):

1. Topic Selection

The students’ writing samples revealed highly traditional and conventional topics. Compositions were found on topics such as “*Varshaa Ritu*” (Rainy season), “*Adarsh Vidhyarthi*” (Ideal student), “*Pustakalaya ke Laabh*” (Benefits of a library), “*Swatantrata Diwas*” (Independence Day), “*Gantantra Diwas*” (Republic Day) and “*Delhi ke Darshneeya Sthal*” (Historical monuments of Delhi). The level of the topics seemed to be far beyond the age of the students. It is worth reflecting at this

point that if writing is a form of expression, then would an eleven-year-old child really wish to write on such standard and conventional topics?

2. Writer's Voice

'Voice' refers to the reflection of the writer's feelings, perspectives, thoughts and ideas in his/her writings (Graves, 1983). It is the writer's desire to share which gets reflected in his/her work.

All the collected school writing samples showed an absolute lack of writer's voice. After reading the content, one did not feel that an 11-12 year old child was talking and sharing his/her ideas. The child's natural urge to express was completely absent. The compositions written by the students were merely informational with a clear lack of purpose and sense of audience. The following samples taken from school writing samples clearly support the above described findings:

- *"Grishm mein jab surya ke aatank se manushya aur pashu-pakshi to kya, ped-poodhe tak vyaakul ho jate hein, tab varshaa ritu hii uneh sahan pahuchaane ka karye karti hai."* (In the summer, when due to the scorching heat of the sun, not only human beings, animals and birds, but even trees and plants begin to wilt, only the monsoon provides relief to them.)
- *"Aaj bhi aadarsh vidhyarthi sushil, vinarma, aagyaakaari, guru-bhakt, anushasanpriya, adhyayansheel, satyavirya tathaa sadaacharii hote hein."* (Even today, ideal students are humble, modest, obedient, devoted to their teacher, disciplined, studious, truthful and of good character.)
- *"Pustakaalaya gyaan ka bhandaar hain aur ek sachaa shikshak hain. Vidhvaan logo kii gyaan ki pyaas inhii pustakaalayo mein baithkar bujhti hein."* (A library is a store house of

knowledge and a true teacher. It is where intellectuals can quench their thirst for knowledge.)

- *"Kisi desh ki sampatti uske bank mein nahi balki uske vidhyaalayan mein hoti hai."* (The wealth of a country lies not in its banks but in its schools.)
- *"Is tyohaar ko Bhaarat ke karoron hindu, muslim, sikh, isaayyii aadi harsh aur ullhaas ke saath manaate hain. Kisi ne sach kahaa hai, 'Aapnaa raajya narak bhalaa aur daastaa swarg ki bhi buri.'" (This festival is celebrated by crores of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, etc. with joy and enthusiasm. Someone has rightly remarked, 'Our state, even though a hell, is better than the slavery of the heaven.')*
- *"Praacheen kaal mein jeevan ko vyavasthit karne hetu brahmacharya aashram mein vidhyarthi maataa pitaa tathaa gryah ko tyaag kar gurukulon mein shikshaa prapt kartaa thaa."*

(In ancient times, as part of the organization of their lives, young students would leave their parents and their homes and go to live in the house of their guru to acquire education).

What is striking is that an 11 or 12 year-old child is writing in this way. If writing is indeed a form of expression, it is really difficult to accept that middle grade children would express like this in their daily lives too.

3. Language

Highly sanskritized and artificial language which in no way reflects the type of language used by the children dominated all the collected school writing samples. They were also overloaded with heavy vocabulary which showed a clear gap between the content, and the writer (child). Some of the words found in school writing samples are listed below:

- *adhyayansheel* (studious)
- *saachcharitrata* (good character)
- *dhvajaarohan* (flag-hoisting)
- *vitārit* (distributed)
- *saatvik* (simple living)
- *prachalit* (popular)
- *vidyamaan* (existing)
- *dushchaari* (bad character)
- *sarvatra* (everywhere)

A strong resemblance was noticed between the language of guidebooks and the language found in the students' school notebooks.

4. Feedback by Teachers

Not one sample had any meaningful or relevant feedback provided by teachers. All the compositions were corrected with the entire focus only on spelling. This exclusive focus on mechanics by teachers indirectly communicates to students what 'right writing' is in the framework of school. Students on their part accept it and therefore attempt to achieve reproduction from guidebooks to the highest degree of perfection.

This observation shows the type of writing students engage with in schools, and in turn, how they construct the notion of 'right writing'. In all school samples, it was found that neither the topic nor the content belonged to the child. The topic was taken from the syllabus and the content was taken from the guidebooks. 'Voice', of course, will not find existence in this writing since the student does not get an opportunity to express his/her own thinking. To make matters worse, correcting so many copies of artificial content does not provide any stimulus to teachers, and hence they prefer to correct notebooks only by signing and pointing out errors. It is really a pity for our education system that rather than focusing on creating reflective

minds, we use 'writing' to create regressive minds.

None of the writing samples seemed to be original; all of them appeared to be copied from guidebooks. If a student had photocopied the entire essay from a guidebook and pasted it in his/her notebook, the result would have been the same. So, rather than creating 'writers', we are creating 'copying machines' in our schools.

Creating Identical Writers: The Core of Classrooms

The above analysis is a reflection of the sad condition of writing pedagogy in our schools. However, it must not be assumed that this analysis is limited to middle grade students only and our primary classrooms do not suffer from this handicapped version of writing. This practice of creating identical writers starts right from pre-primary grades, and all possible attempts are made to ensure that students stop reflection. Graves (1983) believed that about ninety per cent of the children entering first grade believe they can write. Young children love to make marks and drawings on walls, pavements and in books and newspapers. However, the school soon takes away this confidence from them by making them believe that this is not writing, and they cannot write. Young students are made to spend hours practicing sleeping lines, standing lines and tracing dots to design perfect alphabets. The core of desire, expression and communication are sacrificed in this attempt to create identical learners. School does not build on a child's functional knowledge or attempts at writing. On the contrary, pedagogy practices discard the developmental aspect of writing (scribbling, drawing and invented spellings) as 'silly' work and present writing in a strict conventional form to students. Students are made to copy and practice letters of the alphabet, words, sentences

and paragraphs. As the students progress to higher grades, the school further shuts their minds by providing them with options such as guidebooks. We just want identical writers and we happily sacrifice the creative expression of our students for that.

Teachers through their limited feedback further ensure that all students' notebooks appear identical. Most of the feedback either appreciates the students for copying perfectly, or penalizes deviation, usually by demanding that the student write the 'correct answer' ten to twenty times. This feedback seriously damages the student's enthusiasm to write. Kumar (1994), expresses the problem in conventional feedback style of teachers as:

In many primary schools in our country, the only response the teacher makes consists of corrections of spellings or grammar. Copybooks of children are littered with corrections made by the teacher in red ink. On the other hand, when the child has written everything 'correctly', the teacher simply puts a tick mark and signs. Both such responses are highly inadequate if not outright destructive. (pp. 61-62)

Teachers mostly correct students' notebooks only to locate the errors and highlight them. Calkins (1986) identified this focus on errors as the main reason for killing the child's desire to write and therefore said that this factor must never find a place in writing classrooms. In contradiction, school notebooks are corrected solely to mark errors, and students are punished for the deviations. The result of this over emphasis on mechanics is a fear of writing. In order to produce error-free writing, students prefer to use guidebooks and fulfil the teacher's expectation in one easy attempt.

The manner in which our students are exposed to writing begets serious reflection. Writing is a skill of expression and communication and not of copying blindly. The active energy of students

can only be utilized when we allow students to explore the functional and developmental aspects of writing. The extreme mechanical treatment of writing has created such classrooms where one guidebook can damage about thirty-five bright, young and creative minds.

Creating Space for 'Right Writing'

This alarming condition of writing calls for serious reflection and analysis. The creation of a positive environment for writing is the need of our time. Writing is a basic literacy skill and a handicap in writing can have far reaching damages. In this section, some suggestions have been offered to create meaningful and creative writing classrooms.

1. Importance of personal expression in writing

Writing is a form of expression. Hence students must be provided with the scope to write freely and on topics related to their own life. Calkins (1986) emphasized that children too have rich lives. When they come to school, they have their own concerns, ideas, memories and feelings. For teaching writing, it is best to tap the human urge to write and help students realize that their lives are worth writing about. Britton et al. (1975), Martin et al. (1976) and Barnes (1976) suggested that learning is facilitated when students are allowed to use their own language rather than being forced to conform to the particular language conventions of specific subject areas (as cited in Cairney, 1995, p. 126). Hence practices such as morning message, free writing and response journals, which give space to students' personal writing must be integrated in the daily classroom routine.

2. Constructive Feedback

Teacher's feedback is an extremely important component of creative writing classrooms. The

power of feedback must never be underestimated. Atwell (1987) shared that teachers must never criticize students, instead they should try to give feedback which can enable students to develop the writing piece in better way. Feedback must never threaten the writer's dignity. Brill (2004) too supported the idea of 'meaningful response' to students' writing. The extended interviews conducted in his study with children point towards significant writing development when the teacher listened to his/her students and provided meaningful feedback. Kumar (1994) suggests that feedback from a teacher must include his/her response to students' writing. In fact, the feedback must become a dialogue between the teacher and the student.

3. Creating an Enabling Environment

Emig (1983) emphasized the need to create an 'enabling environment' for students. In this environment, students get several opportunities to write and read without the fear of criticism or disapproval. Additionally, the teacher provides appropriate support to students in terms of experiences and feedback. Creating such an enabling environment in our classes is the need of the time. Teachers must ensure that students in their classes must experience:

- Freedom
- Trust
- Frequent opportunities to write and express themselves fearlessly

With this support structure, our young writers can really develop and progress.

We need to understand that writing is a medium of expression and not simply a tool to learn mechanics. How long can we continue to suppress our students' potential to write and express under the pressures of accuracy and mechanics? There is a serious need to revisit our conventional ideas that result in the creation

of artificial writers. We must make writing a meaningful experience for our students by giving the due space to the 'writer' hidden in them. They must be provided with the opportunities to engage with 'right writing' of expression and sharing.

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Generating Discourse in English Classrooms

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Introduction

The poor quality of English language teaching and learning in our country has been a central topic of discussions on quality parameters of education, be it at the primary, secondary or tertiary level. Even after learning the English language for a respectable period of 10 to 12 years, most students complete their school or college education with a defective language apparatus, which stands as a barrier for them in all their academic and career enterprises.

Why does this happen? There is no point in blaming the learners, or even the teachers. The learners learn English for a number of years, but what they learn is not a language but a baggage of language facts consisting of vocabulary, structures, usages and a large number of questions and answers. The teachers 'deliver' the lessons just like a postman delivers letters to their addressees. The postman is not supposed to read and interpret the letters or reflect on their contents; such acts will be no less than professional sacrilege. The receivers in turn do not tell the postman what they feel about the letters they have received. In a similar way, the contents of the textbooks are delivered to the learners who are expected to store them in their memory and reproduce them at the time of examination. At no point are the learners asked to express their thoughts, feelings or their reflections on what is delivered to them; throughout their academic life, they are never asked to produce language. This being the state

of affairs, it is unethical to grumble about their poor English, or their lack of communication skills. Any person who has an understanding about language will admit that language learning does not mean learning hundreds of questions and answers, or doing grammar and vocabulary exercises. We know about the traumatic experiences of the teachers and learners in English Classes. But what we have been doing does not seem to have contributed to relieving them from this nauseatingly lethargic drudgery of teaching and learning stale English words and sentences under the pretext of teaching language. Let us examine why this is so.

Innate Language Faculty

Apart from the most common problems such as lack of a speech community or lack of exposure, English Language Teaching (ELT) in our country has an inherent problem. It grossly ignores the innate language system of the child. Materials and methods are based on the behaviourist assumption that the mind of a child is an empty vessel and everything concerning language comes from outside. By virtue of the cognitive revolution of the 1960s, various innovative methods for facilitating second language learning have evolved across the world. Despite this, insights in cognitive psychology, theoretical linguistics and critical pedagogy are still not reflected in the educational system of our country.

The present model of language teaching is intrinsically deficient in that it completely ignores discourse level transactions, thus narrowing itself to the transmission of isolated language items. However, a word or even a sentence in isolation does not have an independent existence as these components function only in discourse. Language acquisition is accomplished by acquiring 'structure-consciousness'. This can be brought about only through meaningful and need-based linguistic discourse which ensures the recurrence of language items at the phonological, morphological and syntactic level, thus providing a continuum of language experience.

Above all, the non-critical ELT that is being practiced across the country will only put our nation into the shackles of linguistic imperialism. This is manifested in the ever-increasing preference for English medium schools, the clamour for standard English, an irrational dependence on straight-jacketed packages developed by market-driven forces, entrusting native speakers to teach English and the like, to mention a few.

It was in this context that I designed Discourse Oriented Pedagogy (DOP) for the states of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh (prior to bifurcation). The key assumption of this pedagogy is that language survives in the form of discourse and not as discrete sounds, words or sentences. The pedagogy has its impetus in the current understanding of what language is and how it is acquired.

Overview of Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy

The salient features of DOP can be summarized as follows:

The learners get a rich linguistic experience by virtue of an increasing number of discourses and themes. On the one hand, the language input

and output of the learners include a variety of discourse genres such as story, poem, essay, drama etc., with the recurrence of the same theme (say, for example, marginalization). On the other hand, learners are exposed to the same discourse genre (for example, conversation) with different themes.

At all stages of classroom transaction, the prime concern is to make the input comprehensible to the learners so that there is no need to check comprehension. DOP assumes that comprehension is a process that takes place in the mind of the individual learner by virtue of the interplay of several factors such as context of the discourse, communicational expectancy triggered in the learner's mind, familiar words, images created through narratives, brainstorming through interaction, prosodic features, gestures and facial expressions used by the facilitator, code-switching, collaboration with peers, etc.

DOP also takes care of skill development within the context of experiencing a variety of discourse genres, and writing for a variety of purposes and audiences. These skills are not taught by isolating them from their use, or by means of artificially contrived skills lessons. No one can read an alphabetic language without taking into account the connection between sounds and symbols. In fact there are several cues available to the learner to help him / her make predictions about what is going to be read or heard. Teachers have to help children learn how to use all the available cues.

DOP conforms to the Whole Language philosophy. There is a solid foundation of research stemming from cognitive psychology and learning theory, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, language acquisition and emergent literacy, as well as from education, to support a whole language perspective. Researchers have found that whole language

learning/teaching fosters a much richer range of literacy attitudes, abilities, and behaviours than more traditional approaches. Since the focus is on the process and not the product, any teacher who is sincerely interested in becoming a discourse facilitator can become one as the teacher's role is crucial but only optimal.

Using Mother Tongue in the Second Language Class

A major part of inputs given to children (especially at the primary level) is in the form of narratives which have been specially designed to create emotional gestalts in the listeners. However, in order to make the inputs comprehensible we have to fine-tune the narratives by minimizing their linguistic resistance. ELT schools across the world have started advocating judicious use of the mother tongue in the L2 classroom. But the term 'judicious' is very vague. So how is a teacher to interpret this term? She/he may resort to translation or code-mixing. However, translation is not a productive strategy for facilitating language acquisition. In code-mixing, the syntax of the mother tongue is taken as the base, and some words from English are included within the sentence frame. For example, '*Aaj main bilkul busy hun*' (I am very busy today). Most educated persons (and also illiterates) make use of this strategy. This however, is also not very helpful for language acquisition. There is yet another strategy in which the teacher switches over from one code (say, L1) to the other (L2). The switch-over takes place in the domain of discourse, not sentences. This kind of interlanguage is qualitatively different from code-mixing and translation, and can be pedagogically tapped. Let me illustrate the point with the help of a piece of narrative that can

be presented using code-switching in Grade I or II:

Raju was walking to school. At the roadside, there were thick bushes. Some of them had flowers on them.

"How nice!", he said to himself. Suddenly, he noticed that the leaves in the bushes on the left side were moving.

"There is no wind. And only those leaves are moving!" Raju became curious. "I'm sure there must be something in that bush."

He went near the bush, moved the leaves to one side with his hand and peeped in.

"What is that?" Raju wondered.

"Mew!"

"Oh, it's a cat!" he said in surprise.

Let us assume that the story is narrated in the learner's mother tongue, and switches over to English wherever the expressions are underlined. There will be no barrier for the learners to comprehend the expressions in L2. The strategy of switching codes as suggested here will help the learners understand the message without translation. Notice that the narrative is contrived in such a way that the ideas contained in the underlined sections will be generated in the minds of the learners as mental texts.

Curricular Objectives in Terms of Discourse

Discourse Oriented Pedagogy necessitates the redefining of curricular objectives in terms of discourse and not in terms of structures and their relevant communication functions. Table 1 shows the various discourses targeted in classes 1 to 10.

Table 1
Class-wise Targeted Discourses

No	Type of Discourse	Grades									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Conversations										
2.	Descriptions										
3.	Rhymes /songs /poems										
4.	Narratives										
5.	Diaries										
6.	Letters										
7.	Notices										
8.	Drama										
9.	Profiles										
10.	Biographical sketches										
11.	Short Essays / Essays										
12.	Reports										
13.	News reports										
14.	Slogans										
15.	Speeches										
16.	Reviews										
17.	Debates / Discussions										
18.	Compering										
19.	Travelogues										
20.	Choreography										

Discourse Gradation

Table 1 shows that the discourse can be constructed at various levels. It does not specify however which features of the discourse are to be learnt at a certain level. Take for instance, a discourse such as conversation; in order to differentiate between the conversations constructed by a primary school learner from those constructed by a high school student we need to identify the various linguistic levels of the discourse. The conversation as a discourse contains an initiation and a response to this initiation. A beginner's conversation will only contain an initiation and a response, but as she/he goes up to higher levels, the conversations will become more refined both structurally and stylistically. I would like to illustrate this point with the help of a few pieces of conversation.

1. Raju: Where is your book?
Rani: My book is on the on the table.
2. Priya: Where's your book, Maya?
Maya: It's here, in my bag.
3. Rahim: You need some money, don't you?
Ramu: Well, as a matter of fact I do.
4. Joseph: I wonder why that man is so harsh with his wife.
Mary: Why this question all of a sudden?
Joseph: Oh, nothing. You see, I was just thinking about him.
Mary: Don't pretend. You're thinking about her, weren't you?

The conversation constructed at the primary level may not have discourse markers or tags in it. But a conversation constructed by a high school student will necessarily contain such linguistic elements. Similar differentiation will be necessary for other discourses also. Thus we can achieve the gradation of discourse and replace the earlier structural gradation.

The Modular Mode of Transaction

Discourse Oriented Pedagogy envisages a modular mode of classroom transaction. For pedagogic purposes, we may define a module as an activity package that leads to the construction of an idea or a concept. Although a module can stand independently, it may also be used in conjunction with another module. At the end of the transaction of each of these modules, certain constructs will be developed in the minds of learners. 'Transaction' in this case is a loaded expression in the sense that it involves well-defined processes. Discourses such as conversations, descriptions, narratives, songs, letters, etc., targeted at a certain level may be used to build listening and reading skills by embedding them in a mother narrative meant for listening. The interaction that will take place through these will allow the learners to the construct discourses both in the oral and written forms.

Looking at the transaction module as a process-bound entity, the development of a discourse may be conceived as yet another module of the language class. It is easy to discern that these are not merely transaction modules but also language modules. For instance, an interaction which involves both listening and speaking may be considered as a language module that can stand independent of its pedagogic purpose because a language survives through interaction among its speakers. Similarly, reading is an independent activity that individuals may pursue on their own, which need not be perceived as a pedagogic activity. The construction of discourse is yet another language module that can stand independently. Let us say that all these are sub-modules that can be sequentially linked together to make an organic whole.

Field Evidence

When DOP was first introduced in the state curriculum of Kerala in 2007, children in the

primary classes of one of the districts (Alappuzha) produced nearly 20,00,000 journals in English with their creative writing. The results of the recent curriculum revision in English are reflected in the increased general proficiency level of trainers, teachers and students—a fact that has been documented in the study conducted by Regional Institute of English, South India (RIESI), Bengaluru. DOP was subsequently introduced in Andhra Pradesh as part of the curriculum revision that was initiated in 2011. How the pedagogy works in odd situations (such as a single teacher handling all the subjects in more than one class division, first generation learners, teachers without any specialization in English, etc.) was demonstrated in 42 Government primary schools of Narketpally Mandal of Nalgonda district in Andhra Pradesh. Children from various schools presented plays, dances and action songs in English. There was also a colourful display of more than 3000 magazines in English developed by children in the primary classes without any support from outside the classroom.

Teachers who follow the classroom process envisioned in the curriculum have understood the impact of the shift in the pedagogy. They realize that teaching the lessons by simply explaining the meaning of words and sentences and asking children to learn the comprehension questions and their answers will not be enough; they have to help the children construct their own oral and written discourse.

The changes visible in most of the classes that use DOP are:

1. Group products displayed in the form of charts.
2. Pictures drawn by teachers to promote interaction.

3. Big canvas and cut-outs of the figures depicted in the textbooks.
4. Children sitting in groups and sharing their reading experience with others.
5. Better interaction between teacher and learners.
6. Team work among staff.
7. Recorded performances of children by teachers using mobile phones.

DOP is the culmination of more than two decades of intensive experimentation on how sustainable pedagogical models can be evolved with a view to resisting the vicious spread of linguistic imperialism by decolonizing English and bridging the gap between theory and practice. It is expected that the new pedagogy will solve most of the issues related to the poor performance standards of students in English.

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The Journey of an Early Literacy Programme¹

Keerti Jayaram

Introduction

The journey of the early literacy programme has unfolded through a sustained and intensive engagement inside classrooms and through engagement with children, teachers, parents and communities over a period of eight years. The approaches and classroom practices within the programme have evolved in organic ways, with new components replacing older ones as we gain fresh insights. We are inclined to view this process as a knowledge-building exercise with a focus on building the qualitative aspects of the programme. In this paper, I will focus on the continuing attempts of OELP (Organisation for Early Literacy Promotion), Delhi to translate theoretical ideas into classroom processes in ways that make them accessible to education practitioners and are practical to implement on a larger scale. The possibility of replication of OELP interventions has been an important concern and therefore we have attempted to align ourselves to the mainstream system, to the extent possible, so that future scaling up within the system continues to remain in the realm of feasibility.

The Context

During the course of the year 2006, OELP began as a search for ways of building strong foundations for meaningful early literacy in young children, from vulnerable and marginalized socio-economic backgrounds in a semi-urban area on the outskirts of Delhi. In 2008, OELP was relocated to a drought prone area in rural Rajasthan where this work is still in progress.

Most of the young children that OELP works with grow up within oral traditions which are socially entrenched within highly stratified caste-based kinship patterns. They live in a harsh physical landscape within which communities eke out a living through daily wage work at the nearby marble industry or through rain-fed subsistence agriculture. Migration is rampant, especially during the harvest and sowing seasons when entire families shift to neighbouring states to provide the daily wage agricultural work force. The world that these children grow up in is entrenched in narrative and anecdotal modes of spoken communication and therefore the shift to the more dis-embedded and de-contextualized written forms of communication that are prevalent inside classrooms, we have found, is challenging not only for the young learners but also for the adults in their communities (Donaldson, 1978).

Our Understanding

Early literacy is a fairly new area of work within the Indian context with indigenous research on early literacy acquisition within the diverse Indian languages and contexts difficult to come by. OELP has therefore drawn from the insights available within the larger body of research and literature on early literacy and language learning. During the initial years of conceptualization and setting up, OELP drew heavily from Marie Clay's work on Emergent Literacy, which sensitized us to the importance of early home experiences for building the foundations for early

literacy. Our work inside classrooms has reinforced the fact that children are differently equipped for schooling.

Based on the above thinking, it became important for OELP to identify and address the special literacy learning needs of the children we were working with who had minimal opportunity for natural engagement with print during their early growing up years. Further, we realized the value of incorporating developmentally appropriate practices related to emergent literacy especially for new school entrants, who had not undergone a preschool programme. OELP chose to locate itself within a Vygotskian socio-cultural perspective with literacy being viewed as one of the meaning-making processes of language development in which the children's homes and social worlds have an important role to play. The issue of transition from home languages to the language of school also became an area of intensive engagement. Through our classroom-based interventions however, we experienced that mere access to schooling did not make the classroom an inclusive space for learning. We began to take cognizance of more recent perspectives on literacy which argued that literacy does not consist of autonomous or neutral cognitive processes but instead is a social and cultural practice (Street, 1984). This body of work sensitized us to the fact that who you are matters inside the classroom (Bloome & Dail, 1997). Based on the findings of the National Reading Panel (2000) and the literature that has subsequently emerged (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pearson, 2001), OELP chose to locate its work within a Balanced Approach with an emphasis on both meaningful engagement with language and literacy in natural ways and a structured skill building programme which focused on building foundation skills as well as higher order skills. This will be discussed in greater detail in a later section (OLEP's three-pronged approach).

The Challenges

Dealing with dynamic and complex cultural and social-linguistic contexts and a stratified society has continued to pose a challenge. We continue to come across many children who are engaged in classroom processes in mechanical ways. Involving them actively in classroom processes has been a challenge for us. Some stumbling blocks that we have encountered include:

1. Social distance between school managements/ teachers and the learners who come from the lowest rungs of society.
2. Low self-esteem in learners and their communities which is often reinforced by teachers' beliefs and perceptions about the learners.
3. Classrooms are most often sterile and may even be hostile or threatening spaces for many young school-goers.
4. Issues based on home to school transitions such as the shift from spoken forms of communication to pictorial and print-based forms and in the case of many learners a shift from familiar home languages to the language used for classroom transaction.
5. Classrooms which are entrenched in rote learning methods with minimal conceptual understanding and opportunities for thinking and active, meaningful learning.
6. Teachers who are ill-equipped to deal with interactive pedagogies for building higher order skills and do not have the classroom management techniques required for engaging children actively and meaningfully with the learning content;
7. Predetermined learning content and benchmarks for tracking learner progress which have been derived within macro contexts in a 'one size fits all' manner, and which are often a mismatch with the needs of the learners.

The Three Pronged Approach

The three features in the boxes seen in Figure 1 are discussed below:

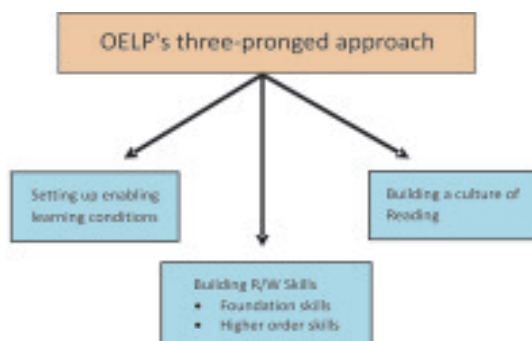


Figure 1. OELP's Approach

A. Setting up Enabling Conditions for Learning inside Classrooms

This is a priority as it is the foundation on which the OELP interventions have evolved. It includes:

- Equipping teachers with effective management techniques for multi-level classrooms which allow for inclusive, active and independent participation in classroom processes
- Providing opportunities for children to bring their real world experiences and home languages into the classroom
- Equipping teachers to build a non-threatening classroom environment
- Equipping teachers to observe children and be responsive to their individual needs towards success achievable for each learner
- Setting up a carefully planned literacy rich environment in the classroom.
- Equipping teachers with methods for using the classroom literacy environment effectively in a variety of ways which address children's learning levels and interests and which stimulate thinking and learning
- Providing access to rich children's literature
- Providing a balance between choice and structure and open and closed activities

which are based on mutual respect and cooperation.

- Developing mechanisms for monitoring the classroom learning environment and learning processes

B. Building Reading/ Writing Skills

This component includes a structured programme for building:

I. Foundation skills

II. Higher order skills

These are addressed simultaneously and not sequentially.

I. Foundation skills

- a) **Skills required for school-based learning** to equip new school entrants to make a smooth transition from their familiar informal home environments to the more formal and rule-bound aspects of a school and classroom.
- b) **Skills required for meaningful reading and writing** for meaningful engagement with a written script, in our case the Devanagari script. The focus of this programme component is to provide learners with planned, competency-based opportunities for engaging effectively and simultaneously with the phonological processes which are required for efficient decoding and the inner processes required for meaning construction. The main thrust of OELP's interventions is to make the processes of decoding more meaningful. The approaches being used enable us to tap the diverse home languages of children which include Marwari; Bhojpuri; Malwi; Bengali; Punjabi. We have attempted to evolve a developmentally appropriate, holistic programme for addressing the issues of transition from oracy to print, and home language to school language, for first generation literacy learners from vulnerable social backgrounds. This programme has

been developed through intensive engagement in classrooms over a period of eight years.

II. Higher order skills

We will look at this aspect in a later section (Classroom Pedagogies).

C. Building a Culture of Reading

This is being addressed through availability and use of rich children's literature within classroom reading corners and village-based libraries, along with a focus on using effective methodologies such as read aloud; shared reading; guided reading and free reading.

Key Programmes

A. Early Literacy Programme

- 1) A two-year foundation programme for Classes 1 and 2
 - The Class 1 units of the Foundation Programme are thematically designed, with books for read aloud and word activities integrated into each theme
 - The Class 2 units are based on combined usage of children's literature and curricular materials.

- 2) Remedial programme for Classes 3 to 5
This is a competency-based programme which is being implemented in community-based learning centres that support children for mainstreaming.

B. The Reading Programme

This is being implemented through classroom reading corners and a network of village based libraries with a focus on building a culture of reading.

Transferring OELP's Conceptual Understanding to Practitioners

Based on insights from available literature research and our sustained field experience, we

at OELP believe that *becoming literate cannot be limited to learning the alphabet or being able to read or write and respond to prescribed texts.*

We believe that *becoming literate means:*

- Being able to think independently.
- Being able to make sense of what one sees, hears or reads.
- Being able to share one's ideas, thoughts and feelings through spoken, pictorial or written communication.

These ideas are presented to the teachers and other practitioners diagrammatically in the form of OELP's hand (figure 2), which makes them more tangible and easier to understand. Please see the diagram.

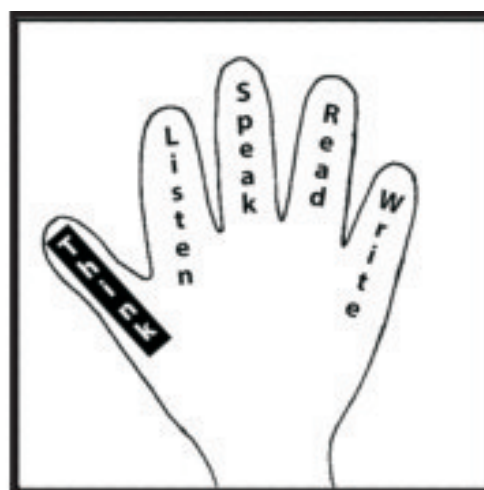


Figure 2. OELP's Hand for R/W

Teachers are helped to draw parallels between the pivotal role that a thumb plays for increasing the functionality and efficacy of each of the four fingers in a hand; and the role of thought (thinking) as the key factor for imbuing meaningfulness to the four aspects of language and literacy i.e. listening; speaking; reading and writing. In other words teachers are able to reflect and understand that *these four aspects of language and literacy become active and meaningful only through their consciously planned linkage with "thinking"*.

These ideas have been used effectively by OELP for getting teachers in rural areas to appreciate that mere inclusion of activities for listening, speaking, reading and writing in the daily classroom programme is not adequate. It is only when we create planned, authentic opportunities for children to reason, reflect, draw inferences, predict, question or narrate in their own words that meaningful language and literacy learning occurs. Teachers within the programme, even at the Class 1 level are being gradually equipped to create such planned opportunities for each of these four areas of language and literacy learning, so that they generate higher order thinking. To achieve this, we film classrooms practices and discuss them during monthly planning and review meetings or capacity building workshops. Teachers are encouraged to reflect upon children's natural language learning processes and the implications that these have for classroom practice. The importance of drawing upon the diversity of children's spoken language resources, their experience, imagination, feelings and curiosity is emphasized so that language and literacy learning can become purposeful and meaningful for each child.

Classroom Pedagogies

To translate this conceptual understanding into classroom practice, OELP uses the Four Blocks Approach. Four-Blocks is a Balanced Literacy framework which was created by Dr. Patricia Cunningham and Dr. Dorothy Hall in the late 80s. Four Blocks allows students to develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills towards becoming effective, literate communicators. It is an instructional delivery system for teachers, with a focus on "the HOW in teaching, and not only on the WHAT". Research affirms that Four Blocks makes instruction more effective and efficient and also helps teachers manage better the precious time that they have to interact with students. This

approach was recommended by Dr. Shailaja Menon from Azim Premji University and is being used currently by OELP in a modified form based on our needs assessment and context as shown in the following diagram:

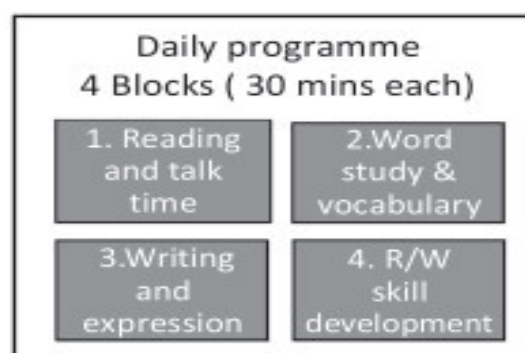


Figure 3. The Four-Block Approach

A brief over view of the OELP Four-Block (some minor modifications have been made in the time allotment for each block based on the specific needs of Classes 1 and 2 in our work area)

Block 1: Reading and talk time

Time duration - 30 to 40 minutes

This includes conversations and read aloud with a gradual shift to guided reading, shared reading and finally independent reading. There is a focus on strategies to be used for pre-reading, during reading and post reading; as well as questions that can generate higher order thinking.

Block 2: Word recognition and vocabulary building

Time duration - 20 minutes

This is done through a variety of activities and games, many of which use the displayed print in the classroom

Block 3: Writing and activities for creative expression

Time duration – 30 minutes

Children are encouraged to use a variety of natural materials to express their ideas in creative ways.

Block 4: Skill building

Time duration – 30 minutes

Skill building focuses on both foundation skills (through OELP's structured approach for facilitating meaningful decoding) and higher order thinking skills (through planned worksheets and a variety of activities, many of which are based on the use of curricular materials).

Mechanisms for learner tracking and programme monitoring have been incorporated into both the above programmes. Individual learner tracking is based on a combination of the following:

- a) Quarterly competency-based summative evaluations
- b) Quarterly formative assessment through classroom observations
- c) Tracking based on individual profile folders

We are currently in the process of streamlining these assessment processes further so that we can bring greater rigour into tracking learner progress.

Conclusion

Many of the newer early literacy perspectives and instructional practices challenge the deeply entrenched existing practices and belief systems. Without going into details it will be adequate to point out that teachers are often not equipped for their new roles. For example, engaging children in meaningful conversations; effective read aloud sessions; guided and shared reading and writing practices; questioning and use of various comprehension strategies are all new, culturally alien and unfamiliar instructional practices, which focus on the active and intentional roles of learners in the processes of learning. Our experience suggests that for many teachers these can be threatening. Some teacher educators have also been resistant to these ideas which challenge their comfort zones. Often, it has taken us time to build a level of comfort and understanding of some of these classroom

pedagogies. OELP is currently working on ways of sharing these ideas through modules of exposure-based training, as well as, audio-visual training packages based on video clips of actual classroom practice.

¹ We wish to acknowledge that this process of conceptualization and evolution of OELP's programme has benefitted from discussions during two Consultations on Early Literacy which were initiated by Sir Ratan Tata Trust for a select group of its partner organizations who are working intensively in this area.

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Writing in Indian Schools: The Product Priority

Malvika Rai

Introduction

This paper attempts to give an insight into what constitutes as writing in Indian schools, and the underlying assumptions about writing and its teaching. I will begin with a brief outline of writing tasks assigned in the majority of our schools. Next, I will describe and critique the guiding framework for assumptions about writing and its teaching in our schools—the Product approach. Finally, I will present a research-based alternative perspective on writing, and its implications for the teaching of writing.

Writing in Indian Schools

Writing activities in our language classrooms, if we may call it so, usually consists of writing the word-meanings of difficult words, dictation, sentence construction, fill in the blanks, and question-answers. A close look at these writing assignments reveals that most of them have a very narrow approach (Britton et al., 1975; Applebee, 1982). Such writing activities do not give children the opportunity to compose their thoughts. In fact Applebee & Langer (2011), describe such type of writing activities as “writing without composing” (p.15). This is because composing is in fact a complex act that requires the orchestration of various skills to shape the text as coherent and whole (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Applebee, 1982). However, unfortunately, we find that in our classrooms, writing is simply viewed as writing correctly. Furthermore, it is also associated with memorizing what has been

copied from the blackboard or textbook. It is fairly common to see children memorizing not only definitions of grammar concepts, but also answers of textbook questions and essays to reproduce in tests.

Present Assumptions About Writing: The Product Approach

What does the fact that children memorize texts to reproduce them in tests convey about our perception of writing? It reflects the view that writing is only about the ability to encode. Thus, the mechanics of writing (spelling, form, etc.) gets emphasized in writing instructions, and exercises such as correct formation of letters, *sulekh*, and dictation become a norm. In addition, it is also believed that writing progresses in a linear manner. Therefore, the teaching of writing gets fragmented. Children are first taught writing by drawing standing and sleeping lines, then they move on to learning the formation of letters and subsequently, in a year or two, they are introduced to writing sentences. As a result, children are subjected to mindless exercises of copying and practicing alphabet formations which convey to them that writing is a matter of drill and practice and is bereft of any meaning (Kumar, 1991).

The Product Approach

The above-mentioned understanding of writing which is so seeped into our school system was unfortunately not based on any systematic

research. Instead, according to Britton et al. (1975), “they are derived from an examination of the finished products of professional writers, from whose works come both the categories and the rules for producing instances of them” (p. 4). So in an effort to understand what writing should be, the exemplary works of writers were analysed, and their characteristics were presented to students as features of good writing to be followed. Furthermore, these features were reduced to teachable formulas for students to reproduce on paper, believing it will turn them into good writers. It is because the focus was on the finished product to understand and define writing that this approach came to be known as the product approach. However, the attention given to the product overlooked the need to inquire into the processes of writing or how this very product came into being (Hairston, 1982; Calkins, 1986; Britton et al. 1975).

The product approach also assumed that other than providing a formula for good writing, the written product of children should be minutely corrected for mechanical errors. This was seen as the key to making them better writers. However, Flower and Hayes (1977) argue that “analyzing the product often fails to intervene at a meaningful stage of writer’s performance” (p. 450), whereas, observing and intervening in the process of writing helps children develop effective strategies for writing (Calkins, 1986).

These assumptions about writing led to three significant myths. First, it gave rise to the popular perception that good writing is a talent which only few people have. Therefore, writing was seen as something which cannot be learnt as it is god-gifted (Hairston, 1982; Flower & Hayes, 1977). Moreover, this assumption about writing hides the fact that every writer goes through a writer’s block and several drafts and revisions before coming up with the final work.

Second, these assumptions perpetuated the belief that writing is a onetime act. In other

words, thoughts are neatly organized in the writer’s mind even before they begin to write (Hairston, 1982). Consequently, writing came to be understood as a linear act more about putting words on paper and editing them. However, research suggests otherwise. Investigations reveal that writing is in fact a recursive and a problem-solving process (Flower & Hayes, 1977, 1981; Graves, 1983). While writing, a writer has to constantly orchestrate many constraints together. These constraints act as problems. For example “What do I want to convey?”, “Who should I focus on as my audience?”, “How should I convince my audience?”, “Should it be an entertaining piece or informative?”, “Is this sentence appropriate?” etc. These problems are innumerable and concern global as well as local level goals such as choice of words or sentence. Furthermore, this juggling of constraints leads to numerous acts of decision-making on the part of the writer to keep the text moving. In addition, writing moves recursively. Writers keep planning, drafting and revising all through the process of writing rather than one following the other (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Hence, writing requires strategies to control these processes and not just rules.

Finally, the belief that by knowing the features of good writing one can be a good writer has had a huge impact on the teaching of writing. Calkins (1986) rightly points out that “most of us in school believe that the way to write is to pick up a pen, put down a main idea followed by three supporting paragraphs (p.16).” This approach to writing not only makes it a frustrating exercise for children but produces a writing that is so dead and similar that even different productions of it may look no better than photocopies of each other. One fails to see the child’s own impression in his writing, i.e. his/her voice. Ultimately, children stop investing in and caring about their writing since it is so devoid of meaning and purpose for them.

Features of a product approach classroom

Even a surface level inquiry into the teaching of writing in the majority of Indian classrooms will reveal that they follow the product approach model. Some of the features of this approach include:

Over emphasis on mechanics

Over emphasis on the mechanics of writing is the most significant feature of the product approach to writing. Its over-concern with the form and mechanics of writing, and discomfort with errors makes students believe that good writing is nothing but correct writing. Consequently, a deep worry for errors stops students from writing (Shaughnessy, 1977).

Prescriptive

The characteristic feature of a product approach classroom is its prescriptive nature. The features of good writing are explicitly prescribed to the students to the extent that sometimes, essays, paragraphs and answers are dictated to them. Students' personal meaning, voice and content become insignificant in a product-based classroom. In prescribing, teachers erroneously presume that there is a fixed formula for writing a good composition. However, giving formulas for writing often produces formulaic pieces (Perl, 1980).

Authoritarian

The prescriptive nature of the product approach classroom puts the teacher in control of the students' writing. It is the teacher who assigns the topic, sets the time and pace, and decides the form for the students to write in. Therefore, all decisions regarding the students' writing are made by the teacher instead of the students themselves. We have earlier seen that writing is a problem-solving and decision-making

process. However, decision making by the teachers makes the students so dependent on them that at every step of their writing, students look for the teacher's approval. Moreover, it robs the students of any sense of ownership towards their writing and through all the grades, they write for a single audience who is also an authority audience—the teacher.

An Alternative Perspective: Writing as a Thought Process

It is time we brought in a research-based understanding of writing in the Indian classrooms which is the process approach to writing. Process approach to writing views writing as a thought process. When we write, we are primarily engaging with our thoughts; it is our thoughts which go through several drafts and again, it is our thoughts that we revise to make our writing effective and powerful. The product approach, because of its emphasis on the product, disregards the process of writing that a writer goes through. Therefore, it does not take into account the fact that the product is the outcome of a process, and if we need to improve the product we cannot do so by ignoring the process.

The underlying assumptions about the product method approach to writing and its traditional model of the teaching of writing were severely criticized in a historic seminar in 1966 at Dartmouth College in America (Nystrand, 2006). Significantly, the Anglo-American seminar of prominent scholars argued that it was not the curricula which needed restructuring but the understanding of language teaching. They observed that teaching of writing was “less to do with techniques and more and more with fundamental insights about language processes” (Nystrand, 2006, p. 13). This observation led to a rigorous inquiry into the act of writing in the decade of 1980s. The results of the inquiry described writing as a complex

cognitive process and completely changed how writing was conceptualized and taught.

Earlier to this, Vygotsky (1962), in his seminal work *Thought and Language* explicated writing to give an insight into how it works. He called it a “deliberate structuring of web of meaning” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 100) which demands the making of meaningful connections between different concepts otherwise not obvious. Further elaborating on Vygotsky’s description, Emig (1977) explained that in the process of detailing and making new connections, a writer indulges in analysis and synthesis which requires the breakup of earlier conceptual connections and the making of new ones, thus, making writing an effective tool for negotiation and development of thoughts.

Furthermore, freedom from actual situations, constant evaluation of thoughts, and analysis and synthesis of concepts help the writer to transform his/her experience into knowledge. Therefore, writing cannot be understood simply as a motor exercise, as encoding or as merely reflecting thoughts. It is a tool which liberates us from the present and gives us the power to explore the abstractness of thoughts (Smith, 1994).

Implication for Teaching: Teachers as Writers

The way to break away from the frustrating and meaningless exercise happening in the writing classrooms is to empower teachers in the craft of writing as well as teaching equally well. This can only happen by reconceptualizing the teacher training programme. Unless teachers are themselves writers and are aware of the writing process, they will keep correcting the product rather than intervening in the process of writing. Graves (1983) believes that a language teacher has to know the “twin craft of teaching and writing” (p.3). Unless the teacher is an insider to the process of writing

and knows writing from the inside, he/she cannot be a writing teacher. Graves (1983) emphasizes that like any craft which is learnt in a studio, writing has to be learnt with a teacher who is a practitioner in the field. A practitioner will know how to guide the child to shape his/her thoughts without taking the control away from him/her. Research shows, it is intervention and scaffolding in the process of writing which leads to the enhancement of writing ability and not red-inking the product. Correcting the product may tell the child what needs to be done, but it is intervention in the process that tells the child how to do it.

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Reflections on Having Been a Learner Before Becoming a Teacher of English

T.C. Ghai

I do not know for sure, but it may be instructive for non-native teachers of English to reflect on their own journeys as learners of English. This may also be of some interest to theorists of language learning.

I became a teacher of English by default rather than by design. To say this is just to point out the role of chance in life, and maybe, to also hint at the devious ways in which the process of language learning itself may operate.

I began my schooling in pre-independence India in a small town in the Indian Punjab. My mother tongue was Punjabi, but my schooling began in Urdu when I was about four-and-a-half years old. I studied in Urdu for four years. In the fifth year, I had to change schools since my family had to shift to another nearby city (my father was in the army and was subject to frequent transfers, hence the family was always on the move). Now the medium of instruction became Hindi. In addition to Hindi, I was also initiated into Sanskrit and English. I have no memory of what I learnt in English or Hindi. But I do remember that I learnt by rote over 100 Sanskrit *shlokas*. My first exposure to English outside school was through the English news bulletins on the All India Radio (Akashvani now). I distinctly remember the set refrain of the news bulletin “This ‘s’ All India Radio, and here’s ‘th’ news, read by Melville de Mellow”. This I heard a few times every day, but I do not remember if I understood anything of the news. My father, though only a matriculate, but having worked under British officers, was a very fluent speaker

of English with hardly any Punjabi accent. In this city however, I seldom heard him talk in English. The following year, my father was transferred once again, and we had to shift to our ancestral village in Punjab. So, in my sixth year of schooling, another language—Punjabi—was added to my repertoire.

Thus by the end of my sixth year of schooling, I had been introduced to four languages—Urdu, Hindi, Sanskrit and English—in addition to my mother tongue, Punjabi. Interestingly, I had been taught four scripts—Persian, Devanagari, Roman and Gurmukhi! But this of course, could not have been a special case. There must have been many people like me who were exposed to a multiplicity of languages and scripts. Moreover, I suppose this kind of exposure may be far more common now in India with so much mobility across states and linguistic regions, and migrations from rural to urban areas. In fact in most places in our country, the learning of English takes place alongside a multiplicity of languages and scripts. I do not remember whether this cocktail of languages and scripts caused any confusion in my mind.

My father was then transferred to a city in Uttar Pradesh (Bareilly), where I went to a school for two years before I was transferred again. In this school, I had to study three languages—English, Hindi and Sanskrit. The medium of instruction now irrevocably became English. I have no memories whatsoever of my English teachers or of the books we studied. I may have a vague memory of having studied William

Cowper's humorous poem "The Diverting History of John Gilpin". However, I do remember the face of our headmaster, a very handsome and sophisticated young Muslim with a postgraduate degree and a very fluent speaker of English with hardly any regional accent, I imagine. Every year, in the annual examination he used to give dictation to class eight, and every year he would choose the same passage. All the students knew this, and yet not many were able to score 100 per cent. I also failed to score 100 per cent, making two mistakes. In one mistake, I misspelt 'across' as 'accros', unsure whether there were two of the letter I should double the letter 'c' or the letter 's'.

My conscious efforts at learning English began from class nine, when I shifted to Delhi after my father's transfer first to Rajasthan and then to Kashmir. In Delhi, I stayed in a very small house with my maternal uncle's large family. In the house, there were about half-a-dozen of us, both boys and girls. We were all studying in different classes and doing different courses and so there was a lot of interaction amongst us. In school, the emphasis was on teaching English through grammar and translation. Although no one said it overtly, nor was anybody was conscious of it, but the focus was on teaching writing skills, reading and listening by default; very little was taught on speaking skills. Most of the effort in learning spoken English was directed towards memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary. I remember, we had a book of translation, grammar and vocabulary in which the emphasis was on learning the rules for use of tenses, phrasal verbs, idioms and proverbs, vocabulary, and reported speech. For example, we were expected to learn all the possible combinations of verbs such as give/take/get along with prepositions in/up/away/out/way/on. All this knowledge was directed towards translation from Hindi into English, and essay writing. The clues for memorizing the rules for tenses also came from Hindi. For example, while

learning present tense, we first memorized the verb endings in Hindi (/ *taa huun/ taa hail/ tii hail/ te hain/; /rahaa huun/ rahaa hail/ rahii hail/ rahe hain/; /chukaa huun/ chukaa hail/ chuke hain/* etc.) (ता हूँ/ ता है/ ती है/ ते हैं; रहा हूँ/ रहा है/ रही है/ रहे हैं/ चुका हूँ/ चूका है/ चुके हैं etc.) along with the corresponding English verb forms. Similarly, we had to memorize all the rules for changing a sentence from direct to indirect speech. The medium of instruction for science (physics and chemistry) and mathematics was English. History (of India and England) was taught in Hindi. We had three text books for English, each containing a selection of poetry, essays and short stories. Of the poems, I remember four: "Abou Ben Adhem", "Leisure", "Lucy Gray" and "The Charge of the Light Brigade". Of the prose lessons, I remember only one which is still in use: "Uncle Podger Hangs a Picture"; and of the short stories I can recollect two: "The Tinder Box" and "Jack the Giant-Killer".

Studying and teaching English seemed like studying and teaching any other subject. I cannot recall any of the present day anxieties or pressures on students to learn, or the teachers and linguists (there were hardly any in the early fifties of the twentieth century, I suppose) to teach or theorize or discover new methodologies. It was all rules of grammar and hard work and *intense practice*. I do not know what level of competence I achieved, but a distant relative of ours who taught Geography at a college rated me just average. Before I was admitted to this school I had appeared for a test for admission to a prestigious school in the city. One of the sentences to be translated from Hindi was: '*Gaadi chal rahii hai*' (गाड़ी चल रही है). Like many others, I translated it as: 'The train is moving'. The teacher ruled it as incorrect. The right translation should have been, he said: "The train is in motion". I believe my translation was not idiomatic and therefore unacceptable.

Needless to say I was refused admission in the prestigious city school.

Outside school, my exposure to English was through the English newspaper, and occasionally through English films. We went to see English films because it was fashionable and also to watch kissing scenes, not to learn English. I barely understood a few dialogues and that also after a lot of effort. I remember my cousins reading Conan Doyle's *The Hound of Baskerville* with great excitement. I do not remember how much of it I read, most probably very little. I also found my cousins reading stories of Sexton Blake, a Sherlock Holmes-like detective. We had no radio in the house, so for nearly three years I hardly heard Melville de Mellow's rich and powerful voice.

After passing high school, I went to college as a science student. Around this time, I also began to prepare for the entrance test for the NDA (National Defence Academy), for which the main subjects were English and general knowledge. This meant reading books on essay writing and general knowledge, memorizing essays on topical subjects such as "Unemployment", "Co-education", "Science: A Blessing or a Curse", "Conscription" and "The Kashmir Problem". Studying general knowledge involved coming into contact with lots of new words relating to science, history, geography, politics, names of places, and famous people and famous books, monuments, instruments, etc. In fact it opened up a whole new world before me. This exposure outside the class, along with essay writing, helped build up my vocabulary and hone my writing skills. Listening to the English and Science teachers definitely helped to improve my listening skills. Since I was a shy student, I did not take part in debates and had no opportunities to improve my speaking skills as the interaction among the classmates was mostly in Hindustani and Punjabi. I passed the NDA written examination

and was also successful in clearing the Services Selection Board (SSB) interview. I was fortunate to get more than a month's training in English conversation before facing an interview by an army captain who happened to be my father's friend. I did not get admission in the NDA, but I was becoming a fluent speaker of English.

Once again I shifted to another college in another city—this time Gurgaon—to do an intermediate course in science, that being the minimum qualification for admission to a degree course in engineering. I passed the exam, but could not get admission. I went on to do my graduation in science from yet another college in Punjab—Government College, Hoshiarpur. It was here, while pursuing a course in science, that I developed an interest in English and began working to improve my writing skills. Ours was a college that was rich in all kinds of co-curricular activities including dramatics and debating, and Sunday discourses in English on the *Bhagavad Gita*. It was a college that staged a Shakespeare play every year in which both teachers and students participated, where we had a visiting professor from England, where students from Oxford came to participate in debates. We had teachers who talked about the "Illustrated Weekly of India" and P. Lal's poems published therein, or discussed Raj Kapoor's films in class, inviting us to comment on them. We had a teacher who made us enact scenes from "The Merchant of Venice" in class with no great dramatic effect but with much amusement. In addition, we read English newspapers and maybe a few magazines, and listened to cricket commentary in English on the radio. One of my lasting impressions of college came from the students and teachers of MA English. The girls were beautiful; a few students even wrote poetry in English. One of them was compared to Edmund Spenser by Miss A. G. Stock, an English woman who taught the MA classes. One of the teachers—an Oxonian—used to hold

classes in the canteen lawn while he smoked pipe and even encouraged students to smoke.

It was this image that I carried with me from college, somewhat envious of this crowd studying English literature, though still holding on to the belief that science and literature did not mix and that I had to remain committed to science. It was also this very image that ultimately led me to join the postgraduate course in English Literature at an evening college in Delhi. This was after I discovered that I could not go to an engineering college because my father had retired and we had no money for my education. I unwillingly joined a security agency in the Government of India where I received training as a Morse code operator, in electronics (a very new field then), and in the use, repair and maintenance of wireless equipment. Now the tug of war between science and literature ceased and I felt at home doing both together—reading English literature and repairing radio transmitters. I worked at the security agency for about thirteen years before I quit. I quit not because I wanted to become a teacher but because the job involved frequent transfers, which disrupted my family life. Teaching seemed the easier way out and teaching English the easiest route. Those were lucky days with many new colleges opening under Delhi University and I got a job as a teacher rather easily; that is how I became a teacher of English, more by default than by design as I said earlier.

Before I finish, I want to add something about one of my multilingual experiences in my Government of India job. I had joined as a member of a batch of 24 science graduates from 12 Indian states, in which at least 8 different languages were spoken—Hindi, Punjabi, Bangla, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Konkani, and Marathi. A few of us did not know a word of Hindi. Apart from our batch, we had at a training centre in Delhi where there were people from other states—Assam, Orissa, Jammu and

Kashmir, Nagaland, Mizoram, Sikkim and Ladakh. In this real Tower of Babel, English was the lingua franca, and both training/teaching and communication among us took place in English. Here, I not only heard more than a dozen Indian languages, but also as many varieties of spoken English, all of them Indian. However, since all the people at the training centre had to interact with the people in the market place in the city, they had to pick up Hindi or Hindustani, or a mixture of Hindi and Punjabi. Over time, all of them became reasonably fluent users of Hindi or this very special north Indian mix of language in Delhi. In our batch on the other hand, we mostly used English or Hindi for communication and learnt only a few words or phrases from other languages, most of them being swear words or crude obscenities. Obviously it was the two dominant languages here—English and Hindi—that had their way, others fell by the wayside. Something similar may be happening in multilingual classrooms today.

Before I joined as a teacher of English I had become quite a competent user of English. I could write reasonably correct English, read higher level texts, speak an Indian variety of English and follow many Indian varieties of spoken English. How and whether I became a competent teacher of English is another story.

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Interactive Approaches to Second/Foreign Language Reading and Their Implications

S.C. Sood

Introduction

Reading is an important activity in both first language (L1) and second/foreign language (SL/FL) classrooms. Yet, conscious research into the process of reading is a recent activity. This research has brought about a significant change in our knowledge of what reading is. It tells us that there are three kinds of reading processes: (1) reading as decoding what the writer has coded, a bottom-up language-driven process; (2) reading as a top-down, concept-driven process; and (3) reading as an interactive compensatory process.

Interactive Approaches

According to interactive approaches to reading in SL/FL, reading is neither a top-down process nor a bottom-up one; it is an interactive compensatory process. In other words, reading is both a reading problem (as a set of reading strategies) and a language problem. Effective readers possess a set of reading skills and strategies for top-down process, and linguistic competence for bottom-up process and engage in an interactive compensatory process according to texts and situations while reading. Researchers and scholars such as Carrell (1988a), working in the area of reading believe that skilled readers constantly shift their mode of processing in order to accommodate the demands of the text and the reading situation (p. 101).

Factors that Prevent/Facilitate Reading for Meaning

Researchers have often tried to identify the factors that prevent learners from engaging in interactive compensatory process. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983/1988, p. 73), following schema theory, posit that background knowledge plays the most important part in the top-down process employed by effective readers in making meaning, lack of which becomes a big obstacle in reading.

Besides background knowledge, trained readers also invoke relevant content and formal schema. Content schema refers to background knowledge about the content area of the text. Therefore, relevant content schema must not only *exist* but must also be *activated* while processing a text. The absence of content schema that involves culture-specific knowledge could lead to a 'short circuit' if the SL/FL reader does not possess this knowledge. In addition, context as well as general knowledge of the world enhances reading comprehension. Formal schema refers to formal, rhetorical organisational structures of different types of texts and genres as, for example, stories, poems, scientific texts, newspaper articles, expository and argumentative texts, and so on. Writers organise their topics in different ways using different types of text organisation and rhetorical organisation. Lack of formal schematic knowledge retards reading comprehension. We will examine this aspect in detail in the following pages while talking about cohesion and coherence in English texts.

Another factor that can prove to be an obstacle in reading is the SL readers' perception of what reading is and what other skills and strategies are needed for effective reading for meaning. Many SL readers think that reading means reading aloud with the correct stress and pronunciation. This may be required in some cases, but reading for comprehension is a silent activity. It has also been found that, unlike effective readers, when SL learners read, they show an excessive veneration for each word and are unwilling to guess the meanings of unknown words. Again, they read word by word instead of reading in meaningful chunks. Some other factors which, though applicable not specifically to SL readers but to L1 readers as well, have a strong bearing on reading for comprehension. Among these are reader's intent, interest and motivation, anxiety, and so on. Reader's intent and purpose can affect the nature and quantity of information that is acquired from the text. Similarly, anxiety, interest and motivation or rather *type* of motivation—extrinsic or intrinsic—would also be important factors to consider in learning to read for meaning.

Reading Problems in SL Classrooms

We have described the factors and strategies that facilitate reading for meaning. But this does not mean that focus on language can be ignored. As Alderson (1984, p. 24) suggests, "it is a language problem, for low levels of foreign language competence, than a reading problem." Many other SL reading researchers have emphasized that language is the major problem for SL students and it interferes with their attempt to make use of interactive approaches to reading.

Researchers have also pointed out that for SL students, we cannot assume that a large vocabulary or basic syntactic structures are already available. Eskey (1973, 1986), Clarke

(1979) and Alderson (1984) characterize these limitations as a language ceiling, or threshold which SL students must surpass if they are to develop fluent reading abilities. They believe that what is important is not just 'decoding' but 'speed and accuracy' and 'automaticity' of decoding skills rather than resorting to top-down process. According to Eskey (1988, p. 94):

It is precisely this 'automaticity' that frees up the minds of fluent readers of a language to think about and interpret what they are reading – that is to employ higher-level, top-down strategies like the use of schemata and other kinds of background knowledge... Good decoding skills are therefore one of the causes, and not merely a result, of fluent reading.

The views expressed by so many researchers on language being a major problem in reading comprehension in SL/FL naturally have serious implications for SL/FL teachers and material producers and hence stake-holders need to consider what these 'language' problems of SL/FL learners are and how they can help learners to overcome them.

Language Problems of SL Learners

It has been found that SL readers of English, whose level of linguistic proficiency is low, face problems in reading comprehension if the text contains a high density of unfamiliar words. Nuttall (1987, p. 65) prefers to call them new lexical items rather than new words. A lexical item is not always a word and neither is it always a content word. It may include new words or phrases, new uses of familiar words, or new idiomatic combinations (such as phrasal verbs), linking devices, and discourse markers. In other words, a lexical item is a word or group of words with a meaning that needs to be learnt as a whole. Words with several meanings, sub-technical vocabulary, super-ordinates, hyponyms, idioms, metonyms are some of the features of language that have been found to

pose problems to SL readers. Significant among these are grammatical and lexical cohesion (reference, substitution, ellipsis, repetition, synonymy, and hyponymy); inter-sentential connections (matching, contrast and logical sequence) and syntactic features (tense, aspect, modality, non-finite clauses and conditional clauses) (Cooper, 1984, 122ff; Williams and Dallas, 1984; Cohen et. al., 1988). Berman (1984) found that non-native speakers find it difficult to process inter-related components of sentence structure (such as constituent structures, structural items, and dependencies) because of 'heaviness' or 'opacity'. By 'heaviness', Berman means the constructions which extend the basic (Noun-Verb (Noun)) structure so that one or more of the sentence constituents is 'heavy' as it contains many sub-parts of embedding or modifications. Heaviness may also occur where the basic NV(N) or 'kernel' structure is violated. 'Opacity' refers to the problems created by certain kinds of cohesive devices such as deletion – by means of gapping, lack of relative pronouns in English relative clauses, etc., and substitution – use of 'one' or verbal 'do' as grammatical substitutes for repeated lexical material as well as of lexical substitution.

While cohesion and syntactic features have been found to pose reading difficulties to SL learners and must be taught, many researchers attribute the language problem to the structure of writing we have referred to above. In other words, realizing text coherence—the logical development of what the writer says what he wants to say—poses a big problem and must be taught.

Writers use various ways to achieve logical development in their writings. Recognizing how a text is organised aids reading comprehension. Researchers identify five different types of rhetorical organisation for expository texts: (1) collection – listing or collection types; (2) causation – cause and effect type;

(3) response – problem-to-solution type; (4) comparison – comparison and contrast type; and (5) description – attribution (Meyer and Freedle, 1984). Some texts are time-ordered; some are space-ordered; others may be uniquely interactive using focal and support sentences to achieve logical development. Awareness of the nature of written discourse also helps readers achieve comprehension. Written discourse, it is said, is interactive but it is not always explicitly interactive; often it may be only implicitly interactive. Recognizing this implicit interaction enables readers to enter into a kind of dialogue with the writer via the printed text and adds to making meaning.

Implications

Several approaches and methods for facilitating reading through activation of background knowledge have been proposed. Besides these, a number of instructional strategies have evolved recently to help make the reader aware of text organisation and rhetorical structure of texts. Many techniques have also been suggested for previewing texts.

Carrell (1988b, p. 248) tries to bring out the common features of these methods. According to her, all these methods train the learner to do a specific activity before reading the text in order to activate appropriate background knowledge. In addition, all these methods have the reader read the text against the background of the activated knowledge. Finally, they all have the reader do another activity after reading to synthesize the new information gained from the text with their prior knowledge. These are popularly called pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities.

Pre-reading Tasks and Activities

The aim of pre-reading tasks and activities is to motivate the learner, to give a purpose for reading and to give or activate background

knowledge (linguistic, conceptual, subject and topic knowledge and socio-cultural knowledge). Pre-reading tasks and activities can be of several types, but they all aim to achieve the same purpose.

While-reading Tasks and Activities

The purpose of these tasks is to guide the learner through the reading of the text, giving him/her practice in imbibing the skills of a practiced reader. These are meant to:

- ensure that the purpose of reading is clear and that this purpose is given before the learner starts reading the text;
- help learners make predictions and employ interactive compensatory process (to switch over from top down to bottom up and vice versa according to the difficulty level of the topic and the text);
- infuse the right perceptions about reading for comprehension (read silently; read in sense groups; read and interpret words and phrases in the context of background knowledge; guess meanings of unknown words and phrases from their shapes, context and other clues;
- encourage learners to vary speed of reading according to the purpose of reading (reading for gist or for details);
- help learners understand cohesion (how sentences have been linked together to achieve logical development);
- allow learners to recognize how paragraphs are linked together to achieve coherence and the type of text organization, i.e. how the writer says what he says (rhetorical organization can be listing type, problem to solution, comparison and contrast, hypothesis to proof, general to specific or vice versa and so on);
- train learners to make use of non-text/non-verbal information, if any, to make meaning;
- teach learners to make inferences as no amount of linguistic text can ever be complete in itself;

- develop sensitivity to language paying attention to words, phrases and discourse markers.

Post-reading Tasks

Once readers have successfully made sense of the text before them, they can be given post-reading activities and tasks. The purpose of these activities is to:

- help the learners extend their schema - assimilate and accommodate the new information received;
- extend active vocabulary;
- provide knowledge of grammar particularly the sort of language errors second and foreign language learners make;
- raise awareness about orthographic practices followed in written texts (such as capital letters, italics, quotations and so on);
- help practice in spoken language, pronunciation, stress and intonation particularly in areas which are likely to prove problematical to the second foreign language learner.

Conclusion

Reading and writing are two sides of the same coin; practice in reading can also be used for giving training in writing. The learner can be given writing assignments based on the reading text to which he/she has been exposed. These writing assignments may include paragraph-writing, essays, notes and instructions, notices, dialogues, speeches, talks, lectures and other similar authentic writing tasks the learners may have to do in a real life situation.

These tasks and activities have given rise to what is called a holistic view of language teaching and learning. Although it is true, as some say, that one learns to read by reading more and not by doing exercises yet it is also true that learners enjoy reading more when they are intrinsically motivated by making sense of what they read. Selection of and exposure to varied reading materials are important, no doubt,

but how these tasks and activities can be devised and used for helping learners in their reading comprehension should form an important component of teacher training and material writing workshops in SL/FL teaching situations.

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Did you 'Like' my Post?: Analysing Facebook in Language Learning

Vasumathi Badrinathan

Introduction

Social media occupies an increasingly important place in research in language learning (Cachia, 2008; McBride, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It fosters positive relationships among students and enhances the credibility of teachers engaged in contemporary student culture (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). This article attempts to situate Facebook (FB) in the broader area of computer mediated learning and within the specific area of computer assisted language learning.

The internet has had an incredible impact on learning in general including language learning. In the world of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), FB stands out for its unique value as a highly popular social networking site amongst the youth. In this paper, I will examine how FB impacts language learning. My research is based on the use of FB by undergraduate students of French over one academic year in Mumbai, India. Analysis of the research data allows us to understand how students perceive FB for learning, and proves that technology increases accessibility towards language learning generating a sense of comfort, disinhibiting language learners and creating scope for collaborative learning. Moreover, it promotes autonomous learning within a social environment different from the traditional one, while combining a socio-constructivist approach. While use of social media within institutional set-ups has its constraints, as a tool it has the potential to engage young learners meaningfully.

Scientific enquiry into the pedagogical virtues of FB is still in its nascent stages. In spite of that, one notes the existence of specially conceived applications for FB; some Open University courses and virtual learning platforms can also be accessed through FB. However FB's dimension of security and danger are all too known, which explains why FB is unwelcome in certain educational establishments. Despite these factors, the use of FB in pedagogical spheres is slowly on the rise. What are the benefits of FB as a learning tool? What is its pedagogical pertinence?

Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites have been growing rapidly. According to Downes (2006), the emergence of new web technologies, such as Web 2.0, does not merely signify a technological revolution but rather a social metamorphosis.

FB allows its users to perform multiple tasks (Solomon and Schrum, 2007) such as mail, text, video chat, timeline posts, 'like', etc. In India, FB enjoys phenomenal popularity amongst the youth and the country is tipped to soon be the largest user of FB in the world (First Post, 2013).

Facebook as a Learning Tool

In recent years, there have been studies on FB as a tool for foreign language learning (Blattner & Fiori, 2009, 2011; McBride, 2009). Mazer, Murphy & Simonds, (2007) examined the impact of teacher self-disclosure via FB on student motivation and classroom climate. The authors

refer to the information about teachers that students have access to through their FB profiles, and the impact it could have on motivation and learning given that the teachers share a common platform on FB. Blattner and Fiori (2009) highlight FB's potential in providing positive gains in foreign language learning. McBride (2009) argues that the typical daily engagement of students with FB could be a motivating factor in generating pedagogically useful foreign language experiences. Karpati (2009) argues that Web 2.0 tools can, in general, help facilitate collaborative learning.

It is useful at this point, to highlight the difference between low-tech and high-tech use of technology. Low-tech use of technology refers to the use of basic applications of technology such as power point and simple tools, whilst high-tech use of technology refers to extended use of technology such as discussion fora and synchronous chats, which transforms learners' approach to learning (Windham, 2005). Ertmer (2005) shows that much of what takes place in the L2 classrooms is of the low-tech variety; high-tech applications in language learning shift the focus from the teacher to the learner and lean on socio-constructivist approaches. This calls for a modification of the teacher's pedagogical posture towards classroom methodologies. We shall look at the use of FB as a high-tech application for language learning.

Methodology

Twenty students of an undergraduate class of French in a university in Mumbai were involved in this exercise during one academic year from June 2012-April 2013. A group FB page was specifically created for these students with rules on mutual respect. They were encouraged to post reactions and interact with each other and the teacher on this page. Micro assignments

were likewise posted on FB. Student autonomy was also studied as students were expected at several junctures to search, identify, analyze and share resources on their own without the teacher's help. At the end of one year, students filled a questionnaire which was analyzed, along with the posts.

Surveys and Results

Students were asked if they were aware of the possibility of using FB for learning purposes before this experiment. Eighty five per cent responded that they had never thought FB could go beyond networking at a personal level. Another 81 per cent stated that they enjoyed posting, responding, submitting mini-assignments on FB and appreciated the convenience of brevity. They also liked supplementing posts with videos, audio links and web links as this allowed them the possibility of illustrating what they had written.

All students stated that they liked FB because they were used to it. Out of the group, 18 students logged on to it on a daily basis on their personal accounts, 4 logged on four times a week and 2 once a week.

Asked if FB had helped improve their vocabulary, 65 per cent responded affirmatively. Some 85 per cent responded by saying that they had watched videos, visited press websites and gathered information around French, which they would not have done otherwise. One student gave the example of watching the French parliamentary session on the bill legalizing same sex marriage saying,

"I would never have thought of watching French news, in fact, I didn't even think it was possible. I discovered a world of comic strips and cartoons and it was easy to understand. We learnt about the Roms and I found so much information on that subject."

Out of the batch, 75 per cent stated that FB motivated them to voluntarily think of French outside the classroom. About 5 per cent said posting on FB boosted their confidence. One student declared:

“I do not feel very confident in the class. But on FB I feel I don’t have to worry. It’s like writing to your friends, everyone reads what everyone writes. I felt so happy when so many of my classmates clicked ‘Like’ for the video I had posted. There was a fun element which seemed to take away the fear and renewed motivation.”

Discussion

Renewed Paradigm

Bringing social media into the learning sphere coaxes learners to enter a known zone, but with a different function. The traditional teacher-oriented learning gives way to a learner-involved paradigm. The idea that the teacher is visibly in the “same space” gives psychological comfort to the learner, thereby strengthening positive attitudes towards the teacher (Mazer, Murphy & Simonds, 2007).

Giving Voice

FB is not just a mode of communication but also a marker of identity. Even the most socially timid and academically weak students found it a convenient tool to give voice to their views. The space was not dominated by the most vocal, as in a classroom. In fact, it proved to be an egalitarian mode of communication.

Student Initiated Activity and Learner Autonomy

Research has proved that using CALL-based activities initiated by the students themselves was

more motivating for them than those initiated by teachers (Warschauer, 1996). The students displayed an interest in the subject that went beyond the allotted projects such as sharing of French cartoons, French songs, etc. Learners also became more autonomous taking charge independently making decisions concerning their learning (Holec, 1981).

While an earlier experiment on blogging (Badrinathan, 2013) failed to have the desired impact, the experiment on Facebook succeeded in the sense that students used the medium frequently for learning. Although the context and learning traditions remained the same, FB as a tool seemed to have attracted a better response from the students.

“I connect to FB everyday, at least once. Now I connect for the sake of French.”

“I did not mind giving some time for this. I connect everyday to FB and now I feel I can express my thoughts in a few lines, share some videos that I like, its fun.”

Another positive result of this experiment was that discussion groups were initiated on FB through student initiatives without any teacher intervention. Errors in grammar were noted for discussion in the class. Additional information on the topics posted was offered by the teacher in class.

The possibility of choosing the topics to share and discuss made the activity more autonomous in nature and learner-centric. There was a transfer of responsibility from teacher to student. In such an environment, the students assumed new roles. They were at once contributor, reader, evaluator, facilitator; the very nature of FB empowered them to play these roles simultaneously. FB helped students negotiate their recreational space and learning space without much difficulty. That is what set this experiment apart from the earlier one (Badrinathan, 2013).

Error Perception

Facing and handling errors was relatively easier through FB, as was proved by this experiment. Students were less inhibited by errors than they would have been with traditionally submitted assignments. With traditionally submitted assignments, the emphasis is on the correctness of content; with FB the focus is less on marking errors than it is on the content itself. As Langer de Ramirez (2010) puts it, “Web 2.0 tools are forgiving of errors and provide students with ways to save face as they practice their new language in cyberspace.”

Melis and Weber (2003) distinguish between ‘technical usability’ and ‘pedagogical usability’, i.e. general usability of the tool versus usefulness for learning purposes. Facebook fulfills the former by virtue of being part of the regular e-routine for students. As far as its pedagogical usability goes, as we have seen, it allows for a fair advantage and shows some very encouraging routes. It allows us to move away from the typical classroom-based language learning that Kramsch (1985) defined as “institutionally asymmetric, non-negotiable, norm-referenced, and teacher-controlled discourse”. It also allows students to learn differently and become active actors in the learning process. That explains why more such activities involving similar tools are not just desirable but even necessary.

However, further research is required over longer durations to measure the effectiveness of FB for language learning. This research was conducted on an experimental basis in addition to a regular language learning class and expounds the benefit that the medium provides. Comparative study and evaluation of student performance using traditional and non traditional tools in order to measure efficacy though not taken into account in the present paper, can be the focus of another study.

Conclusion

This exercise proved that learners took positively to Facebook as a learning tool by combining their learning and recreational space with the specific objective of improving linguistic and cultural capital in the target language—in this case, French. We also recognize its motivational aspect as it created an environment that facilitated learner autonomy especially in the Indian teacher-driven context. Most importantly, it changed the monotony of ritual learning, and as Prensky (2006) notes, “it’s time for education leaders to raise their heads above the daily grind and observe the new landscape that’s emerging”. This, according to me is of particular relevance in the Indian context.

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Interview

Praveen Singh (PS) talks to

Professor Anjani Kumar Sinha (AKS)

Prof A K Sinha is a well known linguist who has maintained a sustained interest in both formal and applied linguistics. Having studied linguistics at CIEFL (now EFLU), Hyderabad, he did his Ph D from the University of Chicago. He taught syntax, semantics, applied linguistics and sociolinguistics for several years at the University of Delhi. He has lectured at various Universities in India and abroad. He still takes active interest in the field and is highly respected among his students, colleagues and friends.

PS: Good Evening Sir! Can we begin by going through the beginnings of your journey as a language teacher and linguist?

AKS: Good Evening. I did my MA in English Literature, and soon after became a lecturer at Patna University. As long as I was there, I taught English Literature to the postgraduate classes and English Language to the undergraduate. It so happened, that one undergraduate paper became language-oriented, in our eyes, grammar-oriented. So the Head of the Department asked me to try teaching it, and also offered his help in case I needed it. I picked up the prescribed A. S. Hornby book and went to the class and taught the class according to the given instructions.

In 1965, I was sent to the Central Institute of English (CIE), Hyderabad for training. On returning to Patna, I was asked if I would be interested in a fellowship at CIE, Hyderabad. I took up the assignment, and for one year I did research at Hyderabad; mine was the first report to be submitted. The title of the report was "Error analysis with a view to finding out how to remove them". When I came back to Patna, I got the offer to go to Chicago. In Chicago initially I thought of doing something in the domain of ELT, but I became so interested in linguistic theory that my orientation changed

and I became a strong supporter of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG).

PS: Pushing on the ELT connection, do you think that being a linguist helps one handle the issues of language learning and language teaching better? If yes, how and what according to you are the points of intersection between linguistics and language teaching?

AKS: Language teaching is a branch of linguistics. There is no point of discussion or debate there. Some British applied linguists claim that their domain of study is different from linguistics. I do not agree with that, and believe that whatever we do in applied linguistics, including language teaching, is guided by a linguistic theory. For instance, most linguists in Britain have been working in the structuralist paradigm, even though they may keep changing labels. That is why they emphasize structural drills and other things like that. Their main focus is on structure. So we cannot say that linguistics is separate from language teaching.

PS: So you do think that all language teachers should have some background, some training in linguistics?

AKS: What I mean is that they should know what a sentence is, what its main constituents

are, what is meant by a phrase, what constitutes a phrase and how its organization takes place. This much knowledge, everybody, not only those who teach a language but also those who teach literature, must have. If you teach literary appreciation and say to your students that the style of a certain text is very complex, you have to explain to them how it is complex. Is it because of the complexity of the structure or is it because of the complexity of thought, or what? So at every stage, whether you teach literature or language, you have to rely on some knowledge of linguistics. You need not go to an institute for training. You can pick up good books, read on your own and develop this habit. There is no bar to that.

PS: Supposing a teacher is not trained in linguistics, could you share something that would help her with her overall performance as a language teacher?

AKS: Yes, the main thing is that he/she should revise his/her grammar, with special emphasis on grammatical structure—how, sentences are built, how they are combined, and how sentences are correlated. For instance, one sentence may lead you to many sentences. Now the reader/speaker, whether he/she is a student or a teacher, when he/she speaks, he/she chooses one of those sentences. For instance, the sentence ‘John broke the glass’, can be said in many different ways—‘The glass was broken by John’, or ‘It was the glass that John broke’, or ‘It was John who broke the glass’, or ‘What John did was break the glass’. These sentences however are not equal as substitutes. They are equal only in the sense of their truth-value, i.e. their semantic-content is the same; syntactically they are different. So why do they choose one sentence in one context and another in another context? When I say, ‘It was John who broke the glass’, I want to assert that nobody

else did it. ‘John broke the glass’ is a plain statement whereas ‘It was John who broke the glass’ emphasizes the actor and brings him into focus.

PS: So, are you saying that a teacher should know that not only the syntax has changed in these sentences but there is something else going on as well?

AKS: Oh! I take that as part of syntax. Knowing sentences means two things: 1) Knowing how sentences are framed and 2) knowing when and how those sentences are used. I also think that learners may not know the subtle nuances in a sentence, but they do know when to use which kind of sentence. They may not be able to analyse sentences, but they know when they should say ‘John broke the glass’, or ‘It was the glass that John broke’, or ‘What John did was break the glass’. They know when to say which sentence.

PS: What do you think about the different approaches to language teaching, or for that matter what is wrong, if at all, with the language teachers that you would want them to work upon?

AKS: If you want to talk about language teachers, that is one thing. If you want to talk about language teaching, that is another thing altogether. Language teachers, as I said, should develop the awareness of the language, know the syntax of the language, the semantics of the language, the function of the sentences. So far as what is wrong with language teaching in India in particular is that we are still hung up on the British models of language teaching that are essentially structuralist. We do not see what is happening elsewhere in the world; and that is because of the organizational skills of the British

Council. Do you know that the British Council earns more money by selling books outside their country than by exporting goods? In other words, book export is their main business and the British Council's main job is to promote export of books. Of course, they are not like booksellers, they do it in a very subtle way. They organize trainings based on their patterns. Then they recommend books. So if you want to teach this, you should take that book, that kind of thing. Linguistics is changing fast but language teachers have not changed because their methods have not changed.

PS: What about the fuss that is made out of the fact that earlier we were focusing on a certain methodology of teaching which had been going on for hundreds of years?

AKS: No, I was talking about methodology and there are several things. We started with the Grammar Translation method in the 17th century and that continued for quite some time. In the 18th century, a new method was developed called the Rational method or the Natural method. It was proposed by Maximilian Berlitz. Let me tell you who Berlitz was. He was not teaching in any school, college or university. He was a German who migrated to the United States of America. He found that there were many Germans there, and they all had to learn English to function in that society. So he organized a small school for people who wanted to learn English, and he and his colleagues would speak only English in the class. The teachers however could understand both German and English, and therefore understood why a student was saying this and not that. In the class, the students were asked to speak only in English and the teachers themselves also spoke only English. This method later developed into the Oral method of Harold Palmer. Both Harold Palmer and Daniel Jones were in favour of learning correct spoken English. They stressed

that real language learning was that of the spoken language, and in order to speak the language well, you have to know the pronunciation well. I think by and large the British system of language teaching is still based on the Oral method.

PS: So you are saying that the methodology of language teaching hasn't really changed?

AKS: Yes, it hasn't really changed much.

PS: But there is always this talk about changing from this particular method to communicative method, task-based method, and so on.

AKS: All these methods are one and the same except for the Developmental approach (i.e. Cognitive approach), which is an offshoot of the two psychological approaches to language, one of Noam Chomsky and the other of Piaget. Except for these two, everybody else talks about the same thing; the labels keep changing with time. As I said earlier, Palmer and others were the first to talk about it. They followed Berlitz's method. They took sentences and made people practice speaking them. When they took sentences in a context, they called it the Situational method. In fact the Audio-Lingual method is an oral method which is a part of the Situational method. According to Situational method, the practice of isolated sentences does not help; they should be put in a context. However, the main focus of Situational method/ Structural method was on the teaching of structures and patterns. In England, this method was championed by A. S. Hornby. In America, its champions were C. C. Fries and Robert Lado.

PS: I am curious; I would like to ask you if Berlitz's method was one of the precursors to the Communicative Language teaching approach which came later?

AKS: Of course, that's what I was trying to show. It was a natural development. One method goes to another, then that goes to the next one and so on, leading to a structural approach, where, as I said, the emphasis was on structure. Later, when Halliday, Widdowson and some other people came on the scene, they talked about the function of those structures; just as I talked about function earlier. But the difference between their view and mine is that when they talk about function, they talk about the function of isolated sentences and they do not relate one sentence to another sentence. When I talk about a sentence, I take the generative method of relating that one sentence to other such sentences which communicate the same idea or meaning. So, during this period of structural approach, the emphasis was on habit formation. This was based on Skinner's advocacy of habit formation which came from Watson and Thorndike.

PS: Having seen the natural growth of these teaching methods, may I now proceed to ask you for a couple of concrete examples where linguistic insights have helped a language teacher deliver better teaching?

AKS: Sure, linguistic insights help a teacher deliver better teaching not only in the grammar class, but even in literature. Let me give you an example that comes to my mind. There is a poem, "All's well with the wind". This poem comprises eight or ten lines and each line says X is in the Y place, A is in the B place, C is in the D place, and they are all well placed. So all the lines function well and all is well. Now the sentences are very simple but none but the last sentence has a verb. It talks about a noun phrase, and the other parts of the predicate are understood in the last sentence 'all's well' meaning 'All IS well'. So we see a kind of parallelism with 'is'. The teachers should

understand what is parallelism and also that this kind of parallelism is not only that of ideas but also of structure. If only I could dig out the poem, maybe I could talk more about it.

PS: Deviating slightly, what do you think of 'Interference' in language (classrooms) where the children come from different backgrounds with different first languages/mother tongues. So, for example, most of the languages spoken in North India are post-positional languages whereas English is a pre-positional language. However, one sees that even a beginner whose first language is a post-positional language, does not make the kind of mistake that one would expect him/her to make while learning English. In other words, he/she never ends up saying something like 'the House in books burning are' for a Hindi sentence such as '*ghar mein kitaaben jal rahi hain*' (books are burning in the house). How does one explain this?

AKS: You are absolutely correct. You see, the main point is that when you learn a language that is different from your mother tongue and whose writing system is also different, you also learn the new writing system. Similarly, if the word order of this new language is very different from your mother tongue, you learn the word order unconsciously. You do not constantly have to remember that in English the verb has to be in the middle, because there are of course sentences such as 'gone are those days', where the verb comes in the beginning. The point is that the mind is aware of the system, and that is how Chomsky has generalized and said that there is something called Universal Grammar (UG). What is UG? UG lays down the general principles which govern the generation of sentences; these general principles are applicable to all languages but they are guided by specific parameters. Therefore, I think, a student is well aware of the fact that English is

a pre-positional language and Hindi is post-positional.

The second point is that when we think of different language systems, there is interference. That interference is with reference to lexical items and noun and prepositional phrases. Take for example, the Hindi postposition '*par*'. We have two words in English 'on' and 'at'. According to an analysis that I had done in 1976, and some students had also studied lately, learners use 'at' in place of 'on' and 'on' in place of 'at'. This is where the teacher's role comes in. The teacher is not able to explain that 'at' indicates 'nearby' or that 'on' indicates 'covering the surface'. The difference between 'he is at the gate' and 'the cat is on the gate' must be pointed out. If you say, 'the man is on the gate', you would be wrong because he cannot be 'on the gate'. Another similar example is that of '*mein*' in Hindi and 'in', 'into' and 'inside' in English, which are used by students interchangeably because they do not know the difference between them and are confused about their usage. There is, however, one thing with which I agree and that is that people learn a language in chunks. For instance, if I learn the phrase 'inside the enclosure', I can also say 'inside the enclosure', 'inside the classroom', 'inside the hall', 'inside the meeting', and so on. Interference may also be found at a phonological level. Many Hindi speakers, not Urdu speakers, say /ph/ instead of /f/. And why do they do that? Because Hindi originally did not have /f/, and so you find the speakers of Hindi using its nearest substitute /ph/.

PS: Is there something that a language teacher can do in order to remedy these things, and should she/he do it?

AKS: Yes, of course the teacher should, especially for pronunciation. When I was in Hyderabad in the 1960s, and also much later, when I came back from the United States, the

thinking was that we should have a version of English called Indian English which is intelligible throughout India. I think that idea is not valid in the eyes of the public today. People want jobs within as well as outside India. Therefore, we have to have a pronunciation that is easily intelligible to anyone from any part of the world. Let me give you an instance of how important pronunciation is from an article published in the newspapers a few years ago. A British lady checked in at one of the hotels in Agra. She went to the clerk and told him to arrange for a taxi to take her to Jaipur and that she be woken up at four o'clock the next morning. The next morning, when the porter went to wake her up, she wouldn't wake up. The manager went and thumped at her door, at the same time yelling something like "I have just to give you a massage". Instead of saying 'message', he said 'massage'. That alarmed the British lady and frightened her so much that she jumped out of the window for she feared an attack on her modesty. The wrong pronunciation of the Indian manager led to this misunderstanding.

PS: Are you then in favour of some kind of standardization or uniformity?

AKS: That is a must, especially for those people who use English for international communication.

PS: But don't you think that this is problematic especially in a country such as India, where bilinguality or multilinguality seems to be more of a norm? Just because one language provides you with more job opportunities, that does not mean that one lets that language dominate the other languages.

AKS: You have asked something very different. If you are talking about more jobs, then jobs are

not created by a language. Jobs are created by market position, and it is the globalized market that dictates that people learn English. Let me tell you that good teachers in high schools in the Hindi-speaking belt in India are aware of standard English pronunciation. As an observer in a high school in Bihar, I have seen teachers making students practice the difference between /sh/ and /s/, /v/ and /w/, etc. These teachers do not have any linguistic training, but their intuition tells them that the students should be able to say /shabda/ (word) and not /sabda/ which has the same initial consonant /sh/ as is found in English words /she/ and /shy/, etc.

PS: Can something be done to ensure that local languages are not lost because of pressures from these 'privileged' languages?

AKS: Well, this is a big debatable issue. Something can of course be done. In fact the government is trying to do it and so are organizations like Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore. But if individuals themselves are not interested, it cannot be done. Look in England too, before the time of Chaucer, there were many dialects, in fact there were six prominent dialects. When London developed as the capital of the British Island, one dialect became prominent. Everybody learnt that dialect, and the other dialects disappeared. That is normal. The so-called dialects of Hindi may be replaced by Hindi, but English cannot replace Hindi or a standard regional language.

Then again, losing tribal languages and identity is a separate issue. It is different from the dialects of languages which disappear as more and more unification and standardization takes place. It is not done by a set of linguists who sit as language planners. They have failed. Language planners tried to impose Sanskrit terms in Hindi but failed as nobody speaks those Sanskrit terms. How many people actually

understand that '*vaataanukuulit yaan*' means air-conditioned coach?

PS: There seems to be another favorite topic among language teachers other than Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device (LAD), and that is Krashen's Monitor Model. What are your views on that?

AKS: I am sorry; but, Krashen's Monitor Model is just an offshoot of Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device. It is not a parallel thing. What Krashen says is that there is a language environment. Chomsky also talks about environment. If the speaker has to speak something, he/she filters out certain other things which come to the mind, retains certain things and organizes them into sentences. All of this happens subconsciously and so fast that even the speaker is not aware of the fact that these things are going on in the mind. Finally, when the speaker starts uttering, he/she monitors whether he/she has spoken the correct thing or not. So, monitoring is the performance aspect; filtering and organization the internal aspect. This is one point on which both Chomsky and Krashen agree, i.e. that this is an internal process, a mental process.

PS: Borrowing from your personal experience as a teacher of English and Hindi, what was it like and what did you learn from it?

AKS: I think, a language teacher has to encourage students to speak fluently. My own experience and also my conviction is that when a student responds in the class, he/she should be allowed to speak whether he/she speaks correctly or incorrectly. The teacher must however mentally note what has been spoken incorrectly and later explain it to the student.

The teacher must also be careful about his/her own pronunciation, and sentence structure. When a teacher asks a question and the student responds, and the teacher interrupts the student to correct him/her in the middle of his/her answer, then the student becomes hesitant to speak and can never attain fluency in that language. At the University of Chicago, I had two PhD students who were learning Hindi. One of them was very cautious, very careful. He would not write or speak any sentence that was wrong; but he could never attain fluency. The other student was very careful when it came to writing, but while speaking, he spoke whatever came to his mind. He made errors, but it was evident from his talking that there was fluency of thought in the language. I would always choose someone who makes mistakes, but speaks and writes fluently rather than someone who does not make mistakes but is hesitant.

PS: So fluency should be given primacy in some sense?

AKS: That's right. For both writing and speaking, fluency should be given primacy. Why do Hindi speakers find it difficult to write essays in English? The same people, by and large, write better in Hindi than they do in English (some of course will not be able to write in Hindi or English). Why does that happen? Well, that's because you start groping for words and phrases and sentence structure. Also, the teacher's habit of correcting the student inhibits them right from the start. The teachers say: "This is wrong, that is wrong and so on. This should not be done".

PS: The last question, any further suggestions for language teachers and maybe for policymakers?

AKS: For policymakers I have nothing to say. Teachers, on the other hand should understand new things. They must have open minds. I would like them to understand one main point. A teacher should not get baffled, irritated or angry just because he/she comes across a sentence that seems wrong to him/her. It is possible that he/she is not aware of the changes that are taking place in the language. Then there are certain things in a language which I wish were not there, but I cannot do anything to get rid of them. For instance, in Hindi we have '*aasanna bhuut*'. In English we have present perfect tense. They look like the same thing on first sight, but if you translate '*aasanna*', '*aasanna bhuut*' means near past. That is the sense in which we use it in Hindi as well as in English. You will find that many people use present perfect in English instead of past tense, but in English, present perfect is well defined. You can use it only when the past action has an impact on the present. The impact point is not there in '*aasanna bhuut*' and that is why people make such mistakes. To conclude, essentially a teacher has to have an open mind to do well.

PS: Thank you so much for your precious inputs Professor Sinha. We look forward to receiving more insights from you in future.

Praveen Singh is a professionally trained English language teacher. He holds an M.Phil. in Linguistics and looks forward to exploring further areas in Micro-Linguistics to get an understanding of the workings of Language.

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Landmarks

Discourse Analysis and the Project of English Language Learning

Yasmeen Lukmani

Introduction

Let us begin by asking a basic question: What do you mean by saying, 'I know French'? Do you mean that you can pass an exam in French? Or, do you mean you can carry on a conversation in French? In other words, does knowledge of a language mean to you a focus on the production of correct sentences as such? Or, does it mean, the ability to communicate with reasonable fluency and intelligibility in speech and in writing? In practice, what you are likely to mean, for example, is whether you can ask your way to a railway station in Paris in French. However, most tests of French are likely to measure you on the ability to produce sentences involving certain verb forms or the agreement between the sentential subject and object or other features of grammar that are perceived as crucial to correct production. These tests are inevitably in the form of isolated, fully formed sentences which are not part of a context, whether in speech or writing. High scores on such tests will not ensure that you can make the jump to ask your way to a railway station or understand the answer to that question, when conversing with a monolingual French speaker in Paris. This approach to testing, with its basis in a similar approach to teaching, can lead to a mismatch between the certificate of proficiency you might have received and the ability to communicate in real life contexts.

So, what is language— a set of rules for the correct use of grammar and phonology, or is it a means of communication? It is only on the

basis of our answer to this question that we can set up appropriate courses for teaching French, or any other language, for that matter.

The Legend

Till about the 1970s, it was widely believed that training in grammar was the only basis for correct production, even though there were notable exceptions to this belief. Around that time, however, with the advent of Chomsky, the field of linguistics underwent a sea-change. Chomsky, of course, believed that language was grammar (or more narrowly, syntax), and went so far as to postulate that a particular section of the mind was dedicated, from birth, to the development of syntax. This mental ability was responsible for generating the syntactic base of the first language, (something which emerges automatically, without training, given exposure to the language) through the mind of the growing child. This section of the mind, or mental ability, Chomsky called the 'Language Acquisition Device'.

Chomsky's ideas took the intellectual world by storm, and Linguistics became one of the most exciting areas to be working in. An offshoot of the study of Linguistics and the search for a Universal Grammar, was the study of Psycholinguistics, which looked at the way in which the Language Acquisition Device made the child learn the different rules of grammar according to its emerging agenda of rules. The deep structure of all languages seemed to show marked similarities, and this was further

corroborated by the fact that similar items across languages were learnt by children at approximately the same age. Certain items were always learnt earlier, regardless of language, e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives, while items difficult not just for foreigners but also for native-speaking children, such as prepositions and articles (in the case of English and German), were acquired much later.

The English Language

This goes against traditional beliefs regarding the grammatical items to be introduced early in the teaching system. For example, in the case of English, the native English-speaking child always acquires the present continuous tense (though without the accompanying auxiliary, e.g., 'I going home') before the simple present. As it happens, so does the second language learner. This has much to tell English language teachers, particularly in India, for they are ready to pledge their souls on the simplicity and therefore the teachability of the simple present tense, first of all, and sometimes only that tense, during the first year of English teaching. The present continuous is delayed till much later. The fact that the simple present tense has several different meanings all conveyed by the same form, which is confusing in itself, does not occur to them. To add to it, it conveys complex meanings, such as the statement of a general truth as in, 'The sun sets in the West'.

Sociolinguistics

Simultaneous to the revolution in Linguistics and the development of the vibrant new area of Psycholinguistics, another related study, that of Sociolinguistics, which led in a somewhat different direction, was also developing. Sociolinguistics is the study of language in its social context. At the macro-level, it deals with the role of language(s) in society, but at the micro-level with which we are concerned, it

attempts to place instances of language in their social context. So, in the use of language we are concerned not so much with correctness, but with appropriateness of use. It involves issues of politeness, body language, how we stand, how we sit, who enters the room first, which are all concerned with newly developing areas like kinesics (e.g. can I cross my legs when talking to you; can I gesticulate?) and proxemics (e.g. how close to you can I stand without your feeling uncomfortable?)

Sociolinguistics has allowed the study of language to come out of the closet, out of the straitjacket in which it had been imprisoned by our dedicated and well-meaning language teachers. Context has a number of features, some of which have been identified: Participants, Medium (Spoken/ Written), Place, Time, Occasion and so on. The language used will differ depending on whether it is spoken or written; the nature of the participants, whether equals or superior-inferior; the time of day: in the middle of the night, utterances which might be normal in the daytime, take on added meaning; the place: is it a classroom, someone's home, the street; the occasion: is it a formal gathering, an informal getting together, or an intimate moment for two? There are several other features but this will suffice to give you the general scope of the context of speech situation.

Text and Context

But aside from the social context, there is also the textual context, or as Halliday calls it, the 'co-text'. The framework of syntax is concerned only with the sentence and its internal relations. It is not concerned with how it relates to other sentences that precede or follow it, its place in the text, or what the tone of voice is in which it is said. Sentences when they occur in text are not necessarily complete sentences. For example, consider this:

‘He didn’t follow my advice. Not only that. What he did was much worse. He fell into the trap that was laid for him and dragged me in as well.’

In this piece of text, sentence 2 is not a complete sentence - It has no verb - it just occurs between two full stops, one of the features of a sentence. But it is by no means incorrect. So, utterances in a text do not necessarily follow the norms of correct sentence production. We give learners the wrong impression if they are not taught to recognize this.

We have to realise that sentences are formal in nature, i.e., they have to consist of verbs, nouns, etc. in the order required for the language in question. But they are not only ‘formal’, they are also, and necessarily, ‘functional’, i.e., the production of a sentence leads to some statement of meaning and even beyond that, to an exchange of meaning between at least two participants in the conversation. The statement of meaning is its textual purpose. The exchange of meaning between participants in a language situation is its contextual purpose.

Language necessarily has a purpose. It is produced in order to convey something. In order to do this, it has to hold together the idea being conveyed by means of connectedness of sub-ideas, the connections being linguistically signaled by cohesive links like ‘however’, ‘nevertheless’ and so on. And, of course, coherence and clarity has to be established within the whole text. There is no point in language existing for its own sake— it is not an object to be admired on its own. It exists in order to convey meaning, and therefore we must try to enable people to convey meaning as clearly and as unambiguously as possible. That should be the goal, whether it is through correct sentence production, or otherwise; the goal, the purpose of language, is to communicate and communicate effectively.

Discourse Analysis

It is for this reason that offshoots of Sociolinguistics developed: Text Analysis and Discourse Analysis. Sometimes the two terms are used synonymously, but most useful and least confusing is to think of Text Analysis as dealing with the textual aspect, i.e., the grouping of ideas and their inter-connections, which involve linguistic connections, and Discourse Analysis, as dealing with language in its social context for purposes of communication.

Issues in Textual Analysis are, 1) forms of linguistic connection, or cohesion, and also, 2) forms of inter-relatedness of ideas, or coherence.

Issues in Discourse Analysis are wider in scope, because it deals with all of communication. It is concerned with how the intention of the speaker is conveyed to the listener, the presuppositions in the minds of each participant, which may or may not help in getting the meaning properly conveyed. For example, if I think you are trying to fool me, then I won’t take your words at face value, so communication is skewed. It is concerned with choice of words, tone of voice, any background knowledge about the speaker/ listener that is available, and other aspects of the speech situation.

It is clear that the approach to language as communication leads both into the minds of the participants as well as into the socio-cultural aspects of their language encounter. This is the reality of the situation in which language is used, and one must realize that the relatively confined area of syntax provides more clear-cut answers as to correctness than the expanded scope of ‘text’, and wider scope still, of ‘context’. It can be argued that syntax, which deals with language form, is a smaller area to learn and can be generalized over all texts and contexts. That may be so, but one has also to learn to generalize over what is appropriate in different textual genres (e.g., description, argumentation,

report writing, dialogue) or different language situations (e.g. frozen, formal-informal, intimate), i.e., to handle language function.

Ultimately, it is a question of whether one wants to generate any sentence at all, following the rules of grammar, however nonsensical, like, for example,

‘Colourless green ideas sleep furiously’ (courtesy Chomsky),

or whether one wants to communicate sense, even if before we reach full native-speaker like ability, the syntax is faulty or only just reasonably correct, to generate understanding.

The best language learners we have are children learning their native tongue. By puberty, they will have learned all the major aspects of syntax; it is only vocabulary which goes on expanding through life. So, children go through a long period of time, even in learning their mother tongue in which they lack complete control of many aspects of syntax. The extensive research on second language (L2) learning shows that the learning procedures of L2 learners are roughly similar to those of L1 speakers. It is felt that when language is learnt in context, the going is easier and the effects much more likely to last.

If the goal of language learning is to make sense in the second/ foreign language, to be intelligible, then it is advisable to teach learners the language in this manner, rather than teach them the syntax and expect them to communicate in the language later. Our experience of learners in the educational system tells us that language learnt with emphasis on syntax is rarely learnt or put into practice. It is only meant to get them to pass an examination.

An Example

If one is prepared to get learners to be meaning-focused rather than language-focused, there are a number of exercises one can try. I have space

for only one exercise for the teaching of writing. You can develop any number of such exercises on your own, once you start thinking along these lines.

1. Developing connections between 2 sets of sentences. Ask the students to come up with any number of sentences they can think of. Put all these indiscriminately into two columns on the blackboard. Now ask them to combine one sentence from Column A with another chosen from Column B, with an appropriate marker of linkage. You can put up on the board markers like **however, but, so, therefore** and other such words. Suppose these are your two columns:

Column A	Column B
I don't like going to school	My mother forces me to study
I like watching movies	I hate doing homework
I love my dog	I like cycling
I am tired of sitting at home in the holidays	I want to climb trees
I am feeling hot	I try to call my friends over
	I put on the fan

You should normally have a much longer list, but let us see how we can combine these.

1. I don't like going to school **because** I hate doing homework.
2. I like watching movies **but** my mother forces me to study.
3. I love my dog **and** I like cycling.
4. I am tired of sitting at home in the holidays, **so** I try to call my friends over.
5. I am tired of sitting at home in the holidays, **instead** I want to climb trees.
6. I am feeling hot **so** I put on the fan.

Now ask them what the relationship is between the two sentences that have been combined, in each case.

In no. 1, a reason is given for a statement.

In no. 2, two opposed things are brought together.

In no. 3, two things are combined which evoke a similar response.

In no. 4, the second activity is a result of the learner's dislike of the first.

In no. 5, opposition between the two activities is shown.

In no. 6, the second activity is a consequence of the first statement.

Making learners aware of these types of relationships will make them understand what is being said or written, and generate in them the desire to produce them on their own. Don't worry too much if the sentences they produce are incorrect. If they don't make sense because of the incorrectness, by all means change that part of the sentence before writing it up on the board, but otherwise, put them up as they are, so learners won't mind volunteering to give sentences. That is much more important. They must learn to produce sentences or pieces of text on their own, and feel that they are capable of doing this. Correctness will come with practice. They themselves will become aware of the need for correctness once they have the confidence to produce words on their own. This confidence is fundamental, so don't crush them by saying that all that they've produced is wrong. Putting up incorrect sentences that they have produced will not do them any harm or reinforce incorrectness, in fact, it will encourage them to do better next time.

It is with great hopes that I have written this piece, the hope that you as the reader will become the innovator who will put these ideas into practice and revolutionise English teaching in particular and language teaching in general if the similar idea were followed in teaching any other language. Perhaps then there will still be

hope that our classrooms will produce students who can actually speak, read, write and understand English or the language they are trying to learn in real contexts of use, with clarity, intelligibility and appropriateness. It is now in your hands.

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Book Reviews

Beyond Methods: Macrostrategies for Language Teaching

Kumaravadivelu, B.
(2006).

Orient BlackSwan,
339 pages.

ISBN 13:
9788125029410

Reviewed by: **Anju S. Gupta**



There are very few academic books that one can term exciting, and fewer still that one can safely predict will have a great impact on L2 teaching-learning in the twenty-first century. B. Kumaravadivelu's book about language teaching in the Post-Method era, *Beyond Methods: Macrostrategies for Language Teaching* is indeed such a book.

For over a century, language educators sought to solve the problems of language teaching by focusing their attention almost exclusively on Method. Traditionally, it was believed that if we followed the right set of teaching principles, it would lead to effective learning outcomes. However, this thinking has been questioned of late as we have witnessed the rise and fall of several methods in the recent history of language teaching-learning. Most of these methods were meant to produce fluent learners of L2, but evidently, this did not happen. Hence, there is disillusionment with 'method' as a means of solving teaching-learning problems. In this 'postmethod era', the attention has shifted from method to pedagogy, i.e. to the teaching-learning processes and the contribution of the teacher in these processes.

The timing of the book is just right. Towards the end of the twentieth century, there was a heightened awareness about the following aspects of the teaching process:

- There can be no designer method that will work for all the diverse contexts where L2 is taught.
- The dichotomy between theory and practice is false and harmful for the teachers. In fact, it results in an unequal power relationship between the teacher and the researcher. It is expected that the researcher supplies the methods which the teacher has to blindly follow in the classroom.
- It is the teacher in the classroom who best understands her students and their contexts. We need to not only privilege the learner but also the teacher as it is her beliefs, her reasoning and cognition which will shape and reshape the content and character of everyday teaching.

(cf. Kumaravadivelu, 2003)

The book is divided into 13 chapters. The first chapter deals with the general nature of teaching as a professional activity as it has developed over the years, and its role in shaping the nature and scope of education.

In chapter two, Kumaravadivelu discusses the limitation of the concept of 'method' and heralds the post-method pedagogy which he visualizes as: Particularity, Practicality and Possibility.

Particularity: The author seeks to facilitate a context-sensitive and location-sensitive pedagogy, where the teachers take into account the social, linguistic and cultural background of their learners in the teaching-learning process.

Practicality: The teachers are encouraged to theorize from their practices in their classrooms, and put into practice the theoretical insights gained from their classroom experience. This gives them autonomy and self-respect.

Possibility: The socio-political resources of learners are leveraged in the classroom ‘as a catalyst’ ‘for identity formation and social transformation’.

Kumaravadivelu concludes Chapter 2 by providing a framework consisting of ten macrostrategies: maximizing learning opportunities, maximizing perceptual mismatches, facilitating negotiated interaction, promoting learner autonomy, fostering language awareness, activating intuitive heuristics, contextualizing linguistic inputs, integrating language skills, ensuring social relevance and raising cultural consciousness. These ten macrostrategies, according to him, will help guide the salient features of post-method pedagogy in the classroom context.

The rest of the chapters (except the last one) discuss the macrostrategic framework in greater detail, and provide microstrategies and exploratory projects to show how a particular macrostrategy can be implemented in a classroom situation. One such strategy and its implementation in the classroom is presented here. In Chapter 3, “Maximizing Learning Opportunities”, Kumaravadivelu begins by critically reviewing earlier practices which reflected the limitations of the teacher, teaching materials and the syllabus. He examines how the teacher and learner can ‘generate learning opportunities’ both inside and outside the classroom. This, according to him, can be done by (a) maximizing learner involvement and (b) the right kind of teacher questions. Kumaravadivelu illustrates these two facets by giving several examples from his experiments. He talks of learner involvement outside the classroom which primarily consists of ways of connecting to the local as well as the global community. He then turns to the microstrategies which are designed for learners to generate learning opportunities for themselves and for their peers through participatory projects. Several projects are suggested which the teachers can adapt according to the learner

context as well as the linguistic and communicative level of the learner. The chapter concludes with response sheets which elicit the teachers’ perception of the ‘learning opportunities created’ and the learners’ perception of ‘learning opportunities utilized’. Interspersed in this chapter, as indeed in all of them, are reflective tasks for the teacher to pause and ponder over at crucial points of the text and critically evaluate the teaching-learning happening in her own context. These are placed in a box which also helps break the monotony of the page. For example, in Chapter 7 (p.158), the reflective task for the teacher is as follows:

Reflective task 7.2

If the educational institution you are associated with has an official policy of promoting a “standard” variety as opposed to a “non-standard variety” of a language, what are the ways in which you can be sensitive to those students who may speak a “non-standard” variety at home? How can you make use of the linguistic resources such learners bring to your class?

In the last Chapter, Kumaravadivelu shows how this approach can be used by the teachers to monitor their own teaching and theorize from their classroom experience.

This book is a must-read for all those engaged in teaching languages. *Beyond Methods* does not merely introduce an attractive and innovative idea or a series of ideas, but it actually hand holds a teacher through the process by explaining the ideas put forth, so that at the end of the book, the teacher is equipped to theorize from her professional experience.

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Children as Authors, Teacher as Editor or Reviewer!

Akaar, Issue No. 37:

अकाश चर्चा; कथा

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(13.3, Dec. 2013-

Mar. 2014, Kanpur)

Reviewed by: **Snehlata Gupta**



As a language teacher I have often lamented about students not being able to write. I have also bemoaned my fate of having to deal with students who do not want to write. I wondered whether it was from a lack of ability or the absence of motivation on the part of my students that I was condemned to read totally dull, boring and uninspiring texts when fulfilling my obligations of “correcting” their written work. I never thought it could have anything to do with the pedagogical practices of writing in school. Anecdotal evidence tells me that I am not alone in this. It is true that there have been a few texts that shone brightly, but they were shooting stars—precious but rare.

The publication under review is a special issue (No. 37) of the Hindi literary journal *Akaar*. This issue features 18 writers from Delhi’s resettlement colonies. The writers are in the age group of 14-18 years and are students of classes 9 to 12 who attend classes at the local government school. They have also been involved in writing practices hosted at collectives run by Ankur Society for Alternatives in Education for about 5-7 years.

In his introductory note to this issue, Priyamvad, the editor of *Akaar*, shares some thoughts about his meeting with the young writers. He testifies that the problems the young writers faced did not relate to finding language, voice and

experience to write their stories. The questions the young authors put to him were at the level of—“How do we take the narrative forward”? “How to end a story”? “How to carry a character across a story”? One wordsmith was struggling with the challenge of extending a story into a novel.

In this special issue of *Akaar*, each young author shares an autobiographical narrative—“Mann ki diary se”, followed by his or her contributed story or stories. The personal note is an expressive communication by the author to the readers on a variety of topics including the reasons why they write, their perception of themselves as writers, what they choose to write about and even a vignette about the character around which the story is woven.

The stories following the personal communications describe a world that is familiar yet strange. They deal with situations and characters that are found in the resettlement colonies. However, it is the treatment of the subject that makes these stories stand out. They bring the locality vibrantly alive, with its people, sights, sounds, and the re-creation of the drama inherent in the commonplace of the everyday.

These stories defy categorization: a fearsome grandmother who makes clay toys—“Khilone bananewali don”; a young boy much sought after for his ability to sing and entertain at different gatherings—“Desi celebrity”; a home that is made of a tarpaulin sheet tied to the wall of the neighbourhood park—“Mera behroopiya ghar”; the life of a transgender—“Kinnar”. Though written by children, the texts do not lend themselves easily to the genre of children’s literature. The stories are very rooted in the context of the authors, yet not limited to them. The writing is that of mature practitioners, which is why they have been welcomed in a literary journal.

Why was I never able to get my students in the language class to generate such quality of

writing? What lesson does this outpouring of literary talent have for the language teacher? As I began to read through the stories written by these young practitioners who are in the same age group as my students and come from similar backgrounds (I teach in a government school), these were the questions that immediately came to my mind.

It is a commonly held belief by teachers that children who come from marginalized backgrounds do not have any stories to tell and in fact cannot have any stories to tell; since they are from economically poor backgrounds, their lives must necessarily lack meaningful content or colour. As a teacher often frustrated by the formulaic, unimaginative and dull writing of my students, (I have to admit) on occasions I too had begun to question whether, because of the background my students came from, they could ever learn to write or want to write differently.

The writings presented in this issue of *Akaar* by these young yet mature practitioners not only instill hope but also indicate the road we need to take. At the end of the day, why do we teach writing to our students, what do we want them to be able to do with their ability to write, what would we like to see them write? These are questions we need to ask ourselves as teachers. If as teachers we would like to see our students and learners acquire the desire, ability and skill to create a variety of literary experiences that entertain, engage and push the reader to think and reflect, I think we would have done our jobs.

What is the difference between the writings of these young authors and that of our students in the context of school? The young writers here have engaged in sustained writing practice over a period of time of about five to seven years. These writers write five days a week for about an hour everyday. They are encouraged to read their writings to a peer group that listens, comments, questions and critiques in a safe and encouraging environment. These writers write

to talk about, share and communicate what they see, hear, and feel about the life around them, the people and places. They have the freedom to write about whatever they want for as long as they want.

In schools, writing is prescriptive and heavy on form. Writing is all about what is valued and may be asked in the examination. Rarely if ever, are children encouraged to write with any authenticity or voice about things they have experienced. Children write in constant fear of being judged on the form of their writing—grammar, spelling, vocabulary or punctuation.

While yearning to read more interesting and varied writing from their students, teachers teach the exact opposite. Somewhere along the way, with our preoccupation with getting children to pass exams, by teaching for tests and completing the syllabus, teachers seem to have lost touch with the reasons why writers write in the real world; and that reading and writing have a life and purpose outside the narrow confines of academic curriculum and syllabi. Being taught to write for the limited objectives of passing exams does not make writers.

The absorbing and riveting style and content of the stories in this issue of *Akaar* is an affirmation of what and how children are capable of writing. Despite coming from an impoverished and marginalized background, these young writers find welcome space in a leading literary journal. What better proof that, given freedom and support in equal measure, children from resettlement colonies can emerge as authors with a new voice. And if children can be authors, should not the teacher take on the role of editor, or reviewer? What new wonders could be seen if this subversion were to take place? Keeping in mind the sheer brilliance of all the texts in this journal, and reflecting on my experience of evaluating written work as a language teacher, perhaps we could see a sky full of shooting stars!

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Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching with Technology

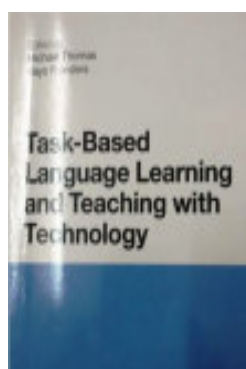
Michael Thomas and Hayo Reinders (Eds.) (2010)

London: Continuum. (242 pages).

ISBN: 978-1-4411-0153-2 (hardcover)

978-1-4411-2401-2 (paperback)

Reviewed by: **Ruchi Kaushik**



In theory as well as in empirical research, a lot of work has been done on the growing popularity of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in face-to-face classrooms. However, very little has been published about TBLT in technology-mediated contexts, and the book under consideration is an attempt to fill this glaring gap.

In the introductory chapter, the editors highlight the objective of the book, which is to present a collection of international research articles that explore the interface between L2 task-based research and CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) in order to probe how research on classroom-based tasks can aid in the understanding of technology-mediated tasks as well as how the use of technology-mediated

tasks can advance task theory and research. The book is broadly divided in two parts. Part I (comprising five chapters) is titled “Research on Tasks in CALL” and addresses theoretical concerns around L2 task-based research and its influence on Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). Part II is titled “Applying Technology-Mediated Tasks” and includes four empirical studies in different disciplines and contexts that engage with issues related to task-based learning and teaching.

In Part I of chapter two, Hartmann and Dittfurth focus on the field of telecollaboration while presenting an overview of the research done in the field of computer-based interaction in task-based teaching. The authors highlight the theoretical issues of Activity Theory (AT) from an interdisciplinary perspective, and suggest that it allows the integration of sociocultural and pedagogical aspects of research on CMC in TBLT. In the third chapter, Peterson explores research on real-time use of tasks in CALL and emphasizes the influence of psycholinguistic and sociocultural interactionist approaches in SLA. He further examines the advantages and limitations of synchronous text-based CMC as a venue for TBLT. The next chapter examines the main goals and approaches of ICALL (Intelligent CALL)—a subfield of CALL that utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) techniques in TBLT. Schulze discusses how over the last thirty years, ICALL has innovatively contributed to TBLT by using the capability of an intelligent computer as a tool to analyze and support student behaviour during task processing. In chapter five, Stockwell provides insights into the use of multiple modes of CMC-based communication tasks founded on empirical data and discusses the effects of these modes in designing and implementing technology-based tasks. The writer also highlights that in computer-based learning environments, it is imperative for the facilitator/teacher to choose the mode keeping in mind the pedagogical goal as technology

brings with it a range of semiotic losses and gains. Collentine, in the concluding chapter of Part 1, bases his arguments on an empirical study using tasks in synchronous CMC to suggest the types of tasks that materials designers must focus on to foster learner linguistic complexity.

Part II of the book begins with Hampel's article on designing tasks in Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), particularly in the context of distance learning. It describes the findings of a blended language course in two pilot studies from the Open University, UK. The author highlights how theoretical approaches focussing on interaction in language learning and learner support via scaffolding and mediation by the computer can significantly contribute in innovations in task design which have not been explored in traditional L2 classroom-based learning. In chapter 8, Raith and Hegelheimer explore the interface between teacher development, TBLT and technology. They elaborate on the role of technology, particularly the use of reflective e-portfolios, in supporting language teacher development by citing the research study findings on student teachers in Germany whose task-based teaching competencies were enhanced through mutual asynchronous feedback. Reeder, in chapter 9, presents a case study of an intelligent CALL (ICALL) prototype entitled *Edubba*. The article highlights three main elements of the *Edubba* language learning software—natural learning processing, a real-world database intentionally distributed across characters in a virtual world and instructional design linking cognitive processes with real-world linguistic processes, genres and forms. The writer draws on research to elaborate how the software was effectively used in creating authentic tasks drawn from professional journalism and critically examines learning tasks within a virtual world simulation. The concluding chapter of the book by Hauck focuses on research on the varied factors that

shape task design and implementation. Hauck's insights are based on a study of learners' e-literacy skills during a four-way telecollaborative project between pre- and in-service teacher trainees from the US and Germany, and German and English language learners from the US and Poland. The chapter also explores the interrelationship between multimodal literacy and online communication.

While the foreword to the book explains the need for this kind of book on TBLT that explores the significance of task-based communication in technology-mediated environments; the afterword suggests ways in which digital technologies and task-based approaches need to learn from each other. Moreover, it also highlights how more CALL research on tasks needs to be reported in order to examine how L2 learners respond to different digital contexts.

Though rich in its scope and coverage, this book may deter general readers from reading it from cover to cover due to heavy use of jargon and technology-related concepts. However, it is a significant attempt by the editors to bring to the fore an international collection of contemporary research articles on the role of technology in task-based learning and teaching.

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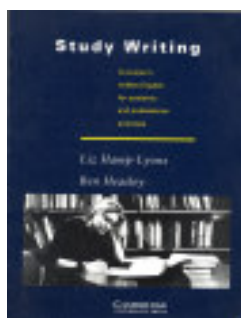
Suggested Readings

Study Writing: A Course in Written English for Academic and Professional Purposes

By Liz Hamp-Lyons and Ben Heasley

Cambridge University Press, UK

First Published: 1987, Fifteenth printing: 2001
ISBN 0-521-31558-1



Study Writing is a handy book for learners at the upper-intermediate and more advanced levels who need to develop proficiency in English writing for various purposes. A major positive point of this book is its recognition and acceptance of the cognitive and discourse aspects of writing which the authors see as *problem-solving* wherein a writer “faces two main tasks: (a) generating ideas in language and, (b) composing these ideas into a written structure adapted to the needs of the reader and the goals of the writer” (p.1). The book has a total of 12 units of which units 1-9 comprise Part I and introduce a range of writing types for practice. Part I introduces functional types of writing and explores i) the principles of writing (“About Writing”); ii) aspects of grammar that are essential for writing expository texts (“Using Grammar in Writing”) and iii) provides an opportunity to students to write extended texts under fewer constraints (“Consolidation”). In Part II (units 10-12), the authors explore the organization of texts in various ways (structuring, developing and

creating texts) and provides a framework for handling complete expository texts.

Most of the units in Part I deal with relationships of various kinds (spatial, class and linear), while one unit gives a general outline on organizing texts based on general-specific patterns. Almost all tasks require active involvement and reading on the part of the student; for example: Task 4 of Unit I requires the student to read the text and decide whether it has been written from a ‘bird’s eye’ view or a ‘pedestrian’ view. Similarly, Task 5 of Unit 3 asks the student to write definitions of terms such as ‘conditioned reflexes’ which draws attention to the differences between abstract and concrete definitions. Such tasks not only draw on the student’s intelligence but also facilitate a greater understanding of the nuances of writing skills. The book makes ample use of illustrations (maps, diagrams, tables, charts, cartoons, etc.), and these visual aids work in conjunction with linguistic inputs to provide a comprehensive consolidation of the writing exercises.

Study Writing envisages writing as a three stage process involving pre-writing, writing and rewriting, and the authors recommend that teachers be involved in the process by participating in it rather than criticizing the end product (the composition). The authors also recommend ‘cooperative writing’, i.e. working with partners and groups, as it makes writing a livelier, more enjoyable and involved practice. In order to develop competence in writing—the last of the language skills after listening, speaking and reading—the author has included a section entitled “Study Writing Yourself”. This

section, which covers both native and foreign language, advises students to engage in the writing process on their own by a) cultivating the habit of reading a wide variety of texts and b) writing regularly (for example in a personal journal). Finally, the teacher's guide at the end of the book has six units (A-F) which provide an excellent overview of how to structure writing sessions; how to make writing interactive; handle reading texts, analyse essay titles; and provide feedback and notes to individual units.

Suranjana Barua

Suranjana Barua has a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Delhi. She is currently working at Indian Institute of Information Technology, Guwahati, Assam. She is interested in Conversation/ Discourse Analysis, Language Teaching, Gender Studies and Translation Studies.

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Reading in a Second Language: Moving from Theory to Practice

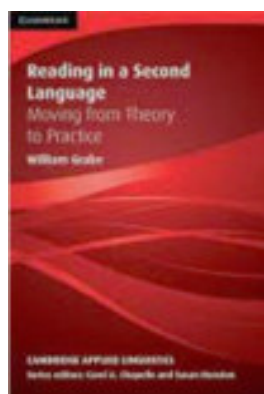
by William Grabe

Cambridge University Press (Paperback)

First published: 2008

Current edition: 2009

ISBN 0521729742



This book is an important contribution in understanding the cognitive process and the pedagogical application for 'reading'. Although it is about second language (L2) reading, it has

a comprehensive review of theories and practices in first language reading research as well. Grabe has given a very detailed account of current research in reading theories in both L1 and L2 studies and their applications in pedagogical practices.

There are eighteen chapters in the book. These chapters are divided into four sections. In part 1, which consists of chapters 1-5, the author discusses academic reading, how reading works at lower processing levels of word and meaning, how reading comprehension emerges, and various complex cognitive concepts and models in reading. Part 2 consists of four chapters about learner differences, leaning to read in L1(s), differences between L1 and L2 reading, socio-cultural sources of reading ability variation and motivation for reading in both L1 and L2. Part 3 also consists of four chapters and covers reading comprehension abilities, research-guided teaching approaches, curriculum development, main-idea comprehension in L2 reading, methods of developing strategic reading and discussions about the importance of vocabulary in reading. Part 4 is about fluency in reading, L2 fluency in word and passage reading, curriculum development and instructional strategies and reading assessment.

This book is an important resource for teachers who wish to teach reading and fluency in reading, and for those who wish to understand theories and methods in teaching L1 and L2 reading. The helpful tips scattered across the book and in the conclusion chapter help teachers with curriculum development and assessment.

Vandana Puri

Word Sorts for Within Word Pattern Spellers

By Marcia Invernizzi,
Francine Johnston,
Donald Bear and
Shane Templeton
(2008)

Words Their Way
Series

Pearson

ISBN 10:
013514843X

ISBN 13: 9780135148433



Words Their Way is a very popular series of books that is highly recommended by teachers to teach children how to read and learn spellings in English in the United States of America. *Word Sorts for Within Word Pattern Spellers* is a companion volume to the core text *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction* which provides the theory and research that underlies the curriculum. This series is targeted for children from kindergarten to fifth grade who can correctly identify one-syllable words in context, but struggle to spell those words when they write them. This series helps children build reading, writing, spelling, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary skills.

Words Their Way follows an open-ended process of learning. The basic idea behind the series is that in order to enhance learning, words can be sorted based on their common attributes and spelling patterns. Students work individually and in groups on word-sorting, games, drawing, labelling, word hunts, etc., in order to understand these patterns. In this book, students learn to spell words with long vowels, diphthongs and r-influenced vowels.

The book consists of 50 word sorts. Sort 1-6 are picture sorts for short- and long-vowel sounds; sorts 7-12 are word sorts contrasting short- and long-vowel sounds and patterns (CVC and CVCe); sorts 13-18 are common long-vowel patterns (CVCe and CVVC); sorts 19-24 are less common long-vowel patterns; sorts 25-30 are r-influenced vowel patterns; sorts 31-35 are diphthongs and other ambiguous vowel sounds; sorts 43-44 are high-frequency words and contractions; sorts 45-46 are inflectional endings for plural and past tense; and sorts 47-50 are long vowel homophones.

Each set of word sorts is followed by an assessment. Each chapter is followed by notes for the teachers section that introduces each set of word sorts. This helps teachers pace their lessons based on the child's needs. Overall, this book is very beneficial for teachers trying to teach young learners how to spell in English in an easy and convenient way.

Vandana Puri

Vandana Puri has a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests include acoustic phonetics, intonation, prosody, bilingualism, new Englishes and sociolinguistics. Currently, she is a consultant with Vidya Bhawan, Udaipur.

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Classroom Activities

Compare and Contrast: Similar but Different

The skill of comparing and contrasting plays a very critical role in comprehension. We use this skill in our everyday lives, for instance while comparing the prices of two sweets, or knowing which shop sells goods at a cheaper price. It is often assumed that this skill develops automatically. However, it is necessary to teach children the strategies for looking at the similarities and differences in order to develop literacy skills. These strategies help students to focus on the language used to bring out the similarities or differences. Focusing on similarities and differences also draws their attention to details, helps to clarify ideas, encourages them to think critically by grouping information according to different requirements and enhances content knowledge. Targeted activities can be used to help students look for similarities between the dissimilar; and differences between the similar. Such perspectives help them to construct new insights into what they are learning. These skills may also be used in other subjects. An outcome of teaching the skills of comparison and contrast is nuanced comprehension.

There are many activities that can be used to develop compare and contrast skills. Some of these include comparing two similar stories with different endings, two different stories with similar endings, different stories written by the same author, the same incident reported by two different newspapers or relayed by two different news channels, and so on.

General Guidelines for Teachers

The guidelines for teachers to develop comparing and contrasting skills in students include:

- Use any form of input for this activity—pictures, texts, videos, photographs, and so on.
- It may be useful to use different kinds of texts—stories, descriptions, advertisements, tables, arguments, and so on.
- Be clear about the purpose—what do you want students to focus on, similarities or differences.
- Select the content carefully ensuring a match with the purpose.
- Prepare a template in accordance with the content to ensure that the purpose of the activity is met.
- In addition to the content, focus on the language used for indicating the similarities or differences, particularly as the grade increases.

The following three activities illustrate how comparing and contrasting skills can be developed in different grades.

Activity 1

Purpose: To develop the skill of comparing and contrasting using similar but different coins.

This activity is recommended for Class III students.

Duration: 40 minutes

Resources:

- 4 to 5 packets of coins of denominations of ₹ 1, 2 and 5 (the number of packets depends on the number of groups)
- Magnifying lens
- List of questions for comparison (see below)

List of questions for comparing the coins:

1. What is the denomination written on the coin? Name the Coin.
2. What is its colour?
3. What is its shape?
4. What is its size?
5. How does the edge feel?
6. What is the year of the coin?
7. What is printed on the face of the coin?
8. What is printed on the reverse of the coin?
9. What is the value of the coin?

Process:

- Divide the students into four or five groups.
- Each group gets one packet of coins, one magnifying glass and the list of questions.
- Students examine each coin, discuss the questions among themselves and then answer them.
- Each group presents a summary of the similarities and differences between the coins.
- The teacher moderates the discussion and addresses differences of opinion, if any.

Activity 2

Purpose: To develop the skill of comparing and contrasting similar but different stories.

This activity is recommended for Class IV students.

Duration: 45 minutes

Resources:

- Two similar stories with some differences
- Set of questions that focus on comparing and contrasting

Instructions to teachers:

- Choose popular stories.

- Make changes in the characters, reasons, explanations or ending of the story. In this example, we have changed the character and the reasons for the main event in the story without changing the ending.
- Carefully list the set of questions focusing on the compare and contrast skills. Take care to ensure that the questions are not mere comprehension questions (for example: what did the hare do?)

Process:

- Divide the students into four or five groups.
- Read out both stories one after the other, taking care not to participate in any discussion.
- Read out the questions and ask the students to discuss the stories in the context of the questions. Students are free to add their own questions to the list.
- Give both stories to each group. The group reads the stories again and discusses them keeping in mind the list of questions given by the teacher.
- Each group compares and contrasts the stories in front of the class.

Story 1: The Hare and the Tortoise

(The teacher may translate the following story in the language of the classroom or in any other language or languages contextually appropriate.)

One day a tortoise was resting under a tree. A hare came along and made fun of the tortoise. He said that the tortoise was slow and lazy. The tortoise challenged the hare to a race. The hare agreed. The race began. The hare ran fast. The tortoise crept slowly. The hare ran so fast that he left the tortoise far behind. So he stopped to rest under a tree. In the meanwhile, the tortoise crept along steadily. Soon, it passed the hare, who was snoring under the tree. After a long

time, the hare woke up and ran towards the finish line. He saw that the tortoise had already reached the finish line. The story shows that working steadily, even if slowly, helps to succeed.

Story 2: The Tortoise and the Stag

One day a tortoise was resting under a tree. He was feeling happy that he had won the race against the hare. A stag passed by. The tortoise began to think that no one could win a race against him. So he challenged the stag to a race. The stag agreed, and the time was set for the race. They also agreed that the bushes that stretched along the race track would mark the distance run by each of them. The stag then sprinted off. The tortoise, seeing the stag run, got scared and began to wonder whether he could win the race. He immediately thought of a plan. He called his cousins and told them to hide themselves under the bushes that stretched along the track. The race commenced. The Stag began to run. The tortoise crept forward slowly. Each time the Stag reached a bush, it called out, “are you there?” The tortoise’s cousin hiding behind the bush shouted “yes”. The stag ran faster. It reached the last bush. The tortoise’s cousin was already there. Mistaking the cousin for the tortoise who had challenged him, the stag declared that he had lost the race. The story shows that working together as a team helps to succeed.

Compare the stories for the following:

1. Characters in the story
2. Reasons for the race
3. How does the tortoise win?
4. What is the lesson?
5. Any other question that you would like to add.

Activity 3

Purpose: To compare and contrast two advertisements selling the same product.

This activity is recommended for Classes VII - VIII students.

Resources:

- Two advertisements with similar purposes (see below)
- A template to draw the students’ attention to the specifics of what to compare and differentiate (see example)

Time: Roughly 1 hour

Process:

- Give each student two texts and ask them to go through both and familiarize themselves (this can perhaps be given the previous day as homework).
- Divide the students into four or five groups. Ask the groups to discuss the questions among themselves. Some of the questions could be as follows:

What is the name of the product?
 What is the profession of the speaker/ writer? How do you know this?
 Whose experience is the speaker/ writer talking about? How do you know this?
 How is the action of the tooth paste explained? Underline the key words.
 What are the key phrases?
 What is the impact of using the product as explained in the advertisement?

After the discussion, the students focus on the similarities and differences either in the form of a table or a venn diagram (as shown in figure 1).

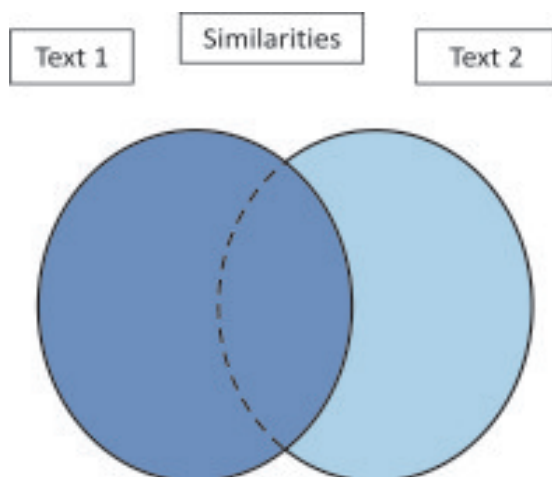


Figure 1. Similarities and differences between the two texts

The groups present to the whole class the similarities and differences between the two advertisements. The teacher consolidates the discussion by highlighting the similarity in purpose of the two advertisements and the differences used to meet the purpose. He/she also touches upon the differences in the presentation of how the tooth pastes protect sensitive. The focus of the discussion is on the content as well as the language. The teacher may briefly touch upon the reasons for using a dentist as a character in both the advertisements, the impact of using first person and third person narrative for communicating the message, the role of key phrases in reinforcing the message and other such issues.

(The teacher may translate the following texts from the advertisements in the language or languages of the classroom or in any other language or languages that may be contextually appropriate).

Text 1

*kyaa aap aaraam se ice cream khaa sakte hain.
cold drink pii sakte hain. nahii na.
yeh sensitivity ke kaaran ho saktaa hai.
aap apnaa toothpaste badal ke dekhiye.
hum aapke liye **NUMBER ONE** toothpaste le
kar aaye hain.
ye aapke daanton ke andar tak jaayegi aur
unhen strong banaayegii.
NUMBER ONE istemaal karne ke kuch din
baad hii aap kuch bhii khaa sakte hain.
log kehate hain ki, “ab ham apnii manpasand
chiiz khaa paa rahe hain”
aur yeh **NUMBER ONE** ke vajaha se hua hai.*

Text 2

*mai ek doctor hoon.
par mujhe bhii hot aur cold khaane se dar
lagtaa hai.
mere dost ne kahaa **NUMBER TEN** istemaal
karke dekho
jab gums loose ho jaate hain to daant
sensitive ho jaate hain
NUMBER TEN daanton par ek saftey belt kaa
kaam kartaa hai.
merii pasand **NUMBER TEN**
aap bhii istemaal karen **NUMBER TEN***

Devaki Lakshminarayan

Devaki Lakshminarayan leads the Azim Premji University Research Centre. Before joining the Foundation, she worked with the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore for over 20 years. She possesses a Doctoral Degree in Psychology from the University of Mysore and Masters in Linguistics from Groningen University, The Netherlands.

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Grammar Activities

Activity 1: Spot the differences

Objectives

1. Help the students develop a sense of present perfect tense.
2. Stimulate articulation in class.

Materials

1. Several pairs of pictures / maps of the same place taken over a period of time, so that the differences over time are evident.

Scope

Upper Primary classes

Procedure

1. Give the students two maps or two pictures of the same place but taken over significantly different periods of time.
2. Based on the pictures, ask the students to speak about the changes that have taken place over time.
3. Give them an example and correct their statements whenever required.

For example:

- The wall clock has changed.
 - The room has been decorated with paintings.
4. Always remember that over-correction impacts the confidence of new language learners.

Activity 2: Let's get Imaginative

Objectives

1. Encourage children to articulate in English.
2. Form sentences using a given structure.

Materials

Keep ready a bunch of story-like situations in your mind or preferably written in a diary.

Scope

Primary and Upper Primary classes

Procedure

1. Give the students a story-like situation and ask them to imagine and articulate responses to the questions posed by you. Look at the following example:

Shaheen's parents went out of town for two days, leaving Shaheen and her sister alone. Describe at least six things that the children did or did not do.

- They watched TV till late night.

What happened as a result?

- They got late for school the next day.

What did the parents say to the children when they returned?

- You should not have watched TV till late in the night.

2. This activity can be used to make the children aware of several grammatical categories (for example verb and past tense in the story) simultaneously.

Activity 3: Unscramble the Text

Objectives

1. Encouraging global comprehension of the text.
2. Helping learners build a coherent paragraph with given sentences.

Materials

Age-appropriate texts in printed form.

Scope

Primary and Upper Primary

Procedure

1. Give the students a set of sentences from the same paragraph but which are not in the right order.

2. Ask them to unscramble the sentences so that they are restored to the original order. For this exercise, it is important to choose a text which the students have read in recent past. For younger students, a story would be more appropriate and for upper primary classes, an expository text may be given. An example of a text is given as follows:

Scrambled text for young learners

There were once five-and-twenty tin soldiers, who were all brothers, for they had been made out of the same old tin spoon.

The first thing in the world they ever heard was the words, "Tin soldiers!" uttered by a little boy, who clapped his hands with delight when the lid of the box, in which they lay, was taken off.

They shouldered arms and looked straight before them, and wore a splendid uniform, red and blue. The soldiers were all exactly alike, excepting one, who had only one leg; he had been left to the last, and then there was not enough of the melted tin to finish him, so they made him stand firmly on one leg, and this caused him to be very remarkable.

They were given to him for a birthday present, and he stood at the table to set them up.

Unscrambled version

There were once five-and-twenty tin soldiers, who were all brothers, for they had been made out of the same old tin spoon. They shouldered arms and looked straight before them, and wore a splendid uniform, red and blue. The first thing in the world they ever heard were the words, "Tin soldiers!" uttered by a little boy, who clapped his hands with delight when the lid of the box, in which they lay, was taken off. They were given him for a birthday present, and he stood at the table to set them up. The soldiers were all exactly alike, excepting one, who had only one leg; he had been left to the last, and

then there was not enough of the melted tin to finish him, so they made him to stand firmly on one leg, and this caused him to be very remarkable.

Scrambled text for older learners

Jip put the straw mattress Mrs. Lyman had made on one side of the cage, sat down, and pulled shut the slat door.

There was a chamber pot in the corner.

He wanted to know how it might feel to live in a cage.

He looked about, taking in the smell of the new-shaved wood.

It felt clean and, well, cosy.

It might be nice to have a place of his own like this, away from the snoring of the old men and Sheldon's tossing and restless sleep talk.

He and Sheldon had done a good job of it.

Well, at least he had a cot of his own now.

He had made a little trapdoor so it could be taken out and emptied and food could be passed in without having to undo the padlock on the main entry.

At first he'd had to sleep with Sheldon and woke up on the floor more mornings than not.

Unscrambled version

Jip put the straw mattress Mrs. Lyman had made on one side of the cage, sat down, and pulled shut the slat door. He wanted to know how it might feel to live in a cage. There was a chamber pot in the corner. He had made a little trapdoor so it could be taken out and emptied and food could be passed in without having to undo the padlock on the main entry. He looked about, taking in the smell of the new-shaved wood. He and Sheldon had done a good job of it. It felt clean and, well, cozy. It might be nice to have a place of his own like this, away from the snoring

of the old men and Sheldon's tossing and restless sleep talk. Well, at least he had a cot of his own now. At first he'd had to sleep with Sheldon and woke up on the floor more mornings than not.

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Richa Goswami

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Call for Papers

Language and Language Teaching (LLT) is a peer-reviewed periodical. It is not an *ELT* periodical. It focuses on the theory and practice of language-teaching and English is only one of the languages one might consider. Since there are already many journals devoted to ELT, we particularly welcome articles dealing with other languages.

Papers are invited for the forthcoming issues. Please follow the Guidelines given in the current issue. The references must be complete in ALL respects, and must follow the APA style sheet. Papers may address any aspect of language or language-teaching. They **MUST** be written in a style that is easily accessible to school teachers, who are the primary target audience of this periodical. The articles may focus on the learner, teacher, materials, teacher training, learning environment, evaluation, or policy issues. Activities focusing on different languages are also invited. The article must be original and should not have been submitted for publication anywhere else. A statement to this effect must be sent along with the article.

No paper should exceed 2500 words including references and the bio-note of the contributor. The bio-note should not exceed 25 words.

Last date for the submission of articles:

January Issue: October 30

July Issue: April 30

Articles may be submitted online simultaneously to the following email IDs:

agniirk@yahoo.com

amrit.l.khanna@gmail.com

jourllt@gmail.com

They may also be posted to:

Vidya Bhawan Society

Fatehpura, Udaipur 313004

Rajasthan, India

Reports

Report on the Techno-Commercial Writing Workshop for Tehri Hydro Development Corporation Limited Executives

Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur

17-26 November 2014

Tehri Hydro Development Corporation India Limited (THDCIL) signed an MOU with Vidya Bhawan Society (VBS), Udaipur to enhance the advanced level writing skills of the Executives of THDCIL, particularly in the field of hydroelectric power. The programme had two components: a “contact period” consisting of a 10 day workshop at Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre (VBERC) and “distance mode” in which the participants will have nine writing assignments and some reading assignments to be done over a period of three months starting 15 December, 2014. In this report, we shall focus only on the workshop, which was held from 17 to 26 November 2014 at VBERC, Udaipur.

The workshop was conducted by the senior faculty consisting of Professors Nirmala Bellare, Pushinder Syal, Iqbal Judge and Rama Kant Agnihotri. Important inputs were received from Dr A L Khanna and Prof H K Dewan. The VBERC team, in particular, Neha Yadav, Priyanka Tak and Ashutosh helped with the academic and logistic arrangements.

The workshop was attended by 28 THDCIL executives (including managers, engineers, finance executives, public relation officers and geologists), and was facilitated by the VBERC team led by four senior resource persons. Various modes of transaction such as discussions, reading, activities based on handouts, individual and group work, etc., were followed in the sessions. The proceedings started with the determination of the base line of the participants’ level of the English language using the “Cloze Procedure” (for measuring overall proficiency), writing, reading comprehension and

error spotting exercises. As an outcome of this, the participants were categorized as very good, good, average and those who need intensive help. Participants belonging to the last category were given extra attention with regard to their writing. It was clear that they needed help in several areas of language such as acceptable use of articles, subject-verb agreement, correct use of appropriate voice, prepositions, clauses, phrases etc. They also seemed to have major problems with sentence structure, text coherence and cohesive devices; writing and editing proposals; approvals; note-sheets; memos; reports; summary writing and data interpretation.

The primary focus of the workshop was on involving the participants in different kinds of writing tasks that were part of their day-to-day work. They were provided with a reading text and assigned tasks that involved a clear understanding of the text. The assumption was that reading critically is an important input into writing well. The participants, individually or in groups, were assigned sentences or paragraphs to examine different aspects of grammar such as subject-verb agreement, nouns, verbs, adjectives, clauses, phrases, prepositions and articles. They were given activities such as making plurals based on sounds and changing the voice of the sentences and then asked to frame the rules for making plurals and changing voice. In the case of group activities, all groups presented their results, whereas for individual activities, only some participants presented. This allowed the participants to get a better understanding of several crucial concepts in language. They began to appreciate that language is rule governed; sentences can be infinitely long; a small set of rules produces an infinite number of sentences; the subject in a sentence can comprise one word or a phrase; verbs can be of three types, namely, intransitive, transitive and ditransitive; there must be a subject in a sentence and it must agree with the verb; there are definite rules for making

negatives and yes-no and wh- questions, etc.

The participants did several tasks involving data interpretation, writing and editing proposals, approvals, note-sheets, memos, reports, summary, etc. In all these tasks, the emphasis was on accuracy, coherence and cohesion. This was followed by a discussion on topic and subordinate statements and the use of non-ambiguous sentences to develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject being discussed. The participants were divided into groups and given various types of graphs including line graphs (storage, stream flow and Labov's diagrams of the New York speech); bar graphs (average power production expense) and pie charts to interpret. After the exercise, the participants recognized that while interpreting data, both "inference" and "interpretation" take place simultaneously. Also, one needs to ensure that all aspects of the data are covered, that there is synergy between the data and its interpretation, and that this is reflected in their reports.

Handouts and visual aids were used for writing and editing assignments. These assignments included:

- writing samples of proposals for improvement and rewriting
- identifying the sentences in an approval letter that justify the approval, i.e. "what you are asking the approval for" and writing a reply stating the reasons for approving or rejecting the same
- making a power point presentation on the components and process of report writing followed report writing assignments (e.g. write a report on the reasons for less generation of Hydroelectric Power and give the suggestions for increasing it)
- a discussion on the attributes of a good summary and summary writing.

The participants were provided ample opportunities to write, rewrite and rectify their proposals and approvals. Reworking on the writing assignments was followed by individual

feedback from the faculty and a discussion around some commonly made errors. These activities enabled the participants to monitor their progress in writing. Many of them could notice the trajectory of their progress from the first day to the last.

A significant component of the programme will be conducted in the distance and self-study mode. To equip the participants to handle this, there was a discussion on types of reading (skimming and scanning); how to remember and comprehend a text; and do's and don'ts while reading (e.g. do silent reading, do not read one word at a time, read in chunks and move backward and forward). To consolidate the learning from the assignments, participants were given reading assignments (e.g. text on gravity and corrosion). The participants went over the assignments individually and submitted a summary.

The learning from all these activities will be consolidated in the distance mode through a series of writing and reading assignments over the next three months. Three writing assignments (reading comprehension, data interpretation, summary, proposal, approval and report writing) will be assigned in a month. The participants will have to complete these assignments and submit them for grading within a stipulated time. The participants asked for reference material especially on prepositions and articles; we will try to provide some relevant material.

The participants said that the major outcomes of the workshop for them included: an understanding of grammar and its practical implications for writing; identification of the problem areas in their writing and communication skills; learning to express their ideas and thoughts through writing; and learning the importance of cohesion and coherence at the sentence and paragraph level.

At the end of the workshop, a tentative schedule of the distance mode was shared with the participants.

VBERC Team

Forthcoming Events

7th Annual N.E.A.R Language Education Conference

Date: 23 May 2015 (Saturday)

Organization: Niigata Chapter of the Japan Association for Language Teaching

Location: University of Niigata Prefecture

Last date for submission of papers: 15 February 2015 (Sunday)

Website: <http://nearconference.weebly.com/>

15th Annual Conference of the Japan Second Language Association

Date: 6-7 June, 2015

Deadline for receipt of abstracts: 14 February 2015

Notification of acceptance: 28 February 2015

Location: Hiroshima University, Japan

Organization: Japan Second Language Association

For inquiry and more information, please contact Miki Shibata (J-SLA Secretariat) at shibatam@hiroshima-u.ac.jp.

Website: <http://www.j-sla.org/en/j-sla2015-call-for-papers/>

Bi-SLI 2015: Bilingualism and Specific Language Impairment

Date: 2-3 July 2015

Location: François Rabelais University, Tours, France

Abstract submission deadline: 1 February 2015

Notification of acceptance: 15 March 2015

For inquiry and more information, please contact Laurie Tuller at bisli2015@univ-tours.fr

4th international Conference on Language, Education and Diversity

Date: 23-26 November 2015

Location: The Owen Glenn Building, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Organization: Faculty of Education, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Call for papers open: 16 June 2014

Deadline for receipt of abstracts: 1 February 2015

Contact: led@paardekooper.co.nz

MATSDA/University of Limerick 2015

Conference: Creating Motivation with L2 Materials

Date: 20-21 June 2015

Organization: Materials Development Association (MATSDA)

Location: PhD TESOL Summer School, University of Limerick, Ireland

Deadline for receipt of abstracts: 31 March 2015

For inquiry and more information, please contact Freda Mishan at freda.mishan@ul.ie

Website: <http://www.matsda.org/events.html>

ECLL 2015 - The European Conference on Language Learning

Date: 1-5 July 2015

Deadline for receipt of abstracts : 1 March 2015

Registration Deadline for Presenters: 1 June 2015

Organization: The International Academic Forum (IAFOR)

Location: Thistle Brighton, Brighton, United Kingdom

Enquiries: ecll@iafor.org

Web Address: <http://iafor.org/iafor/conferences/ecll2015/>

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Published & Printed by Riaz A. Tehsin on behalf of Vidya Bhawan Society, published from Vidya Bhawan Society, Dr. Mohan Sinha Mehta Marg, Fatehpura, Udaipur 313004; Editor, Rama Kant Agnihotri; printed at Choudhary Offset Pvt. Ltd., 11-12, Gurudas Colony, Udaipur (Raj.) 313001.